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ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide is intended to introduce fifth and sixth grade children to the study of poetry. Separate units include discussion of, suggested activities for, and questions about (1) metrics and scansion; (2) rhyme scheme and stanza; (3) diction, denotation and connotation, and onomatopoeia; (4) rhyme (end rhyme, masculine and feminine rhyme, internal rhyme, off-rhyme); (5) hyperbole; (6) symbolism; (7) point of view; (8) idea patterns; (9) metaphor I; (10) metaphor II, extended metaphor, and review; (11) speakers in poems; (12) simile; (13) allusion; (14) imagery; (15) dramatic situation; and (16) the whole poem. (See related documents CS 200 500-506, and CS 200 508.) (DI)

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INTRODUCTION

In the lessons preceding this one, your class has concentrated on various poetic techniques, isolating them more or less from the total fabric of the poem for the purposes of examination and identification. Such a process is necessary, but it is a rather sterile exercise if it stops there. For the goal of all this investigation has been not the ability to identify poetic devices, but to enjoy more fully the experience of reading a poem. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to "put back" all the isolated elements into the whole poem.

To borrow a useful distinction made by the poet-critic John Ciardi, we want our students to be able to answer not only the question, "What does this poem mean?" but also the question, "How does this poem mean?" Answering the first question only leads to bad paraphrase and moral-abstracting. Answering the first question in terms of the second, on the other hand, leads to close and intelligent reading, to appreciation of the internal dynamics of the poem, and consequently to a far more sensitive perception of the poem's "meaning." For in poetry the way something is said is part of what is being said.

In discussing the poems in this chapter with your students, you will want to make several very important points, which have been more or less implicit throughout the previous lessons. The first is that not all the poetic devices studied operate in all poems. In other words, to criticize a poem for, say, a lack of delicate imagery is futile, if the poem is trying to do something else. The key to the interpretation of one poem may not work at all for the next: the force of the first may reside in a powerful metaphor, while the force of the second may reside in its suggestive implications.

It follows from this that in reading the whole poem it is important to pay attention to its intent. A futility comparable to the one mentioned above would be to criticize a limerick, say, for lacking high seriousness or a significant theme.

A third point you will want to make is that there is no poetic device to be found in a good poem that cannot also be found in a bad one, just as there is no poetic device that cannot also be found in our everyday speech. Technique alone does not make a good poem, any more than the most profound truth put into verse makes a good poem. The happy union of form and content, in terms of the poem's performance of its intentions, makes a good poem.

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Another idea you may wish to bring in is what is called in critical jargon the "affective fallacy." This is just a fancy term for the undiscriminating subjective response: "I like it so it must be good." If this series of lessons has had any effect, it should have encouraged the beginnings of objectivity in your students' response. As we said in our introduction to this curriculum, one of the characteristics that distinguishes man from beast

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is his ability to intellectualize, to objectify. Just as the happy union of form and content produces the good poem, so does the happy union of the emotional and intellectual response produce the good reader. If your students can begin to say, "Yes, I see what this poem is trying to do, but it doesn't grab me," or "I like this poem because ...," you can consider that you have achieved some success.

With the poems that follow, we have provided the usual brief analysis, but feel it hardly necessary to add suggested questions or activities. The questions are always the same at this stage: Here is a poem; what is it trying to do? How is it trying to do it? How well has it succeeded in its performance? Or, if you prefer to reduce everything to a single question, just ask, "What's going on here?" The answers you get in an intelligently guided discussion will be a rough but fairly reliable index of the success of the program.

THE WHOLE POEM--1

Purpose: To appreciate a poem as the sum and significance of all its components.

Selection: "The Eagle," by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (see page 3).

Analysis:

This poem can serve as well as any to illustrate the point (if it still needs illustration) that poetry need not necessarily moralize, or carry a message, or have any "practical" purpose. It is sufficient if a poem communicates a vivid impression, or enables us imaginatively to participate in the poet's perceptions. This simple poem of Tennyson's satisfies the requirements we have suggested for a good poem: it is completely successful in accomplishing its intention.

America's adoption of the eagle as a national symbol is not an original inspiration. For ages it has symbolized majesty, power, pride, and the composure of confident power. Tennyson portrays the bird in a way that helps us understand why it has always had this symbolic appeal. How does he achieve this? Primarily by taking us to the eagle's world, and describing that world with concentration and intensity.

To get your students to see how well this poem performs itself, probably a line-by-line analysis would be best. The first line personifies the eagle ("crooked hands"). Your students may remember having studied the metaphors in this poem in the chapter on metaphor; if so, they will have something to build on this second time around. As an example of diction, ask them to notice "crag," a more romantic and impressive word in its connotations than, say, "cliff" or "rock." If some of them claim that the alliteration on the hard "c" sounds in the line intensifies its meaning, good for them.

The second line suggests the remoteness of the eagles's world, not only in the phrase "lonely lands," but also in the quietly suggestive hyperbole of "close to the sun." This idea is reinforced in the third line in which the eagle's "world" is the sky, in which there is only himself, the sun, and the "azure world." And here, in this world, "he stands," powerful, remote, dominant.

The second stanza provides balance and a new direction, illustrating the principle of idea patterns. This is most apparent in the final two words, "he falls," which contrast with "he stands" in the same position in stanza one. With this shift in action, we also get a shift in direction. The first stanza has placed the eagle in his world; the second describes his relation to ours--the surface of the planet. The first line directs our attention downward to the "wrinkled" sea, a particularly vivid image. If any of your students have ever observed the ocean from a high cliff, or an airplane, they will recognize the precision of the visual image. And the

sea "crawls" beneath the eagle. The sea, generally a symbol of surging power, here crawls impotently below the majesty of the bird: he dominates our world as well as his own.

In the second line, the mountain "walls" is practically a dead metaphor, but the original force of the metaphor compares the cliffs of a mountain to the walls of a castle. The poem comes to a satisfactory conclusion by describing the eagle's relation to earth: a simile likening him to a bolt of lightning.

You will surely not want to go into this much detail with your class, but some such process of laying it all out and then putting it all back into the poem will help them see how the devices Tennyson uses function together to provide us, not with a moral, but with an intense experience. "What's going on here?" A great deal.

THE EAGLE

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

--Alfred, Lord Tennyson

THE WHOLE POEM--2

Purpose: To appreciate a poem as the sum and significance of all its components.

Selection: "Carmel Point," by Margaret Phyllis MacSweeney, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 75.

Analysis:

This poem can be bounced off the Tennyson poem to illustrate one of our main points. You can't approach every poem the same way; the intention and performance vary too much. "Carmel Point" differs in almost every respect from "The Eagle."

This poem is a retrospective narrative, an anecdote to which the poet attaches considerable significance. Thus it differs in its basic idea pattern or movement from the more or less static description of Tennyson's poem. As a consequence, the speaker and the dramatic situation assume some importance here. A further comparison reveals an almost total absence of those devices which characterized "The Eagle" and gave it its vividness. There, metaphor, simile, compression, and vivid imagery were the primary means by which the poem achieved its effect; here, these devices are much more subdued, and are subordinated to other effects. The main point to make is that what is going on here is different from what was going on there, although each in its own terms is highly successful.

While "Carmel Point" does not state a moral or make a point directly, implicit in it is a statement about the human condition and human experience which is much more immediate than Tennyson's poem.

Put baldly and badly, which is to say stripping it of everything that makes it a poem, this is a poem about a child's introduction to morality, her first glimpse of the fact of death, her first bite of the apple. The transition from innocence to knowledge, the initiation to the central fact of life, is one of the primary themes of literature. Miss MacSweeney has captured the first moment of illumination.

The speaker (now mature and knowing more than she did at the time of which she speaks) relates a simple incident. The first section of the poem is a simple statement. The child, at the beach, is watching a sea anemone beautiful and green. This sets the scene and characterizes the young girl as taking an innocent joy in a lovely thing.

But beauty is deceptive, and death is everywhere. The crab, "unafraid and young" (like the narrator, we realize, and thus the symbolic significance of the anecdote begins to expand), is trapped by the anemone. This blind savagery of the natural world is given ambivalent overtones of terror and beauty by the terms in which the girl describes it. The anemone is a "princess" with velvet petals, a lovely creature who "softly," not fiercely, embraces the victim. The act is final: the crab is dead. The section closes with a restatement of the beauty of this world, but now we (and the narrator) know it is a world of death as well as beauty. Never again will the innocent enjoyment of the first section be possible for the speaker.

The third section restates the central theme of the poem, as the frightening combination of the finality of death in a world of beauty is made explicit. The crab is "softly" expelled. Invite discussion from your class of the effect of all this happening softly, slowly, and noiselessly underwater. What mood is the poet trying to build here? What is the point of having the "princess of rare jade" do all this softly and slowly?

The final stanza completes the movement of the poem, the transition from innocence to knowledge (and with it fear). Could the child of the first section ever have said "I am sorry to be born, I am afraid of many things"? What has happened in between the first and last sections to make this change? What is the symbolic relation between the crab and the girl? Questions such as these should help your students see the basic movement of the poem.

They should recognize that in this poem they are dealing with an entirely different set of poetic techniques, and hence an entirely different set of criteria for discussing and judging a poem, than they were with Tennyson. It might be worthwhile to have them make contrasting lists of the approaches necessary for understanding each poem. Such a list could be the basis for a composition. They will find that it is much easier to write a comparative composition about two poems than it is to write about a single one.

For interesting comparison and discussion, have your class read E. E. Cummings' poem, "Poem," on page 148 of Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967). Cummings is dealing with a similar theme and using the same scene, the seashore. Ask your students if the conclusion he makes in the final couplet is applicable to the speaker of "Carmel Point." A comparison of these two poems would also make a good subject for a short composition.

THE WHOLE POEM--3

Purpose: To appreciate a poem as the sum and significance of all its components.

Selection: "Low Tide," by Edna St. Vincent Millay, from Collected Poems. New York: Harper & Row, 1921.

Analysis:

We include a third poem dealing with the same setting as a way of illustrating to your class that an inexhaustible supply of writing topics can come from the same basic situation--here the familiar one of a trip to the seashore. The implications of this fact should be pointed out to them in their own writing. They should see that there is never "nothing to write about."

Of primary interest in this poem is the relation between structure and meaning--what we have called in this curriculum "idea patterns." The first quatrain deals with the scene at low tide. The slimy wet rocks and the barnacles are described with vivid imagery, and we learn that the speaker is "dreaming" there. The grammatical structure carries over to the second quatrain, which describes the scene at high tide. The point of the poem is in the contrast, made distinctive by the quatrain structure but united by the syntax. The bottom of the sea at low tide can be a place to dream, but it is not really man's domain; at high tide it is "far from shore"--a place to die.

In a way "Low Tide" is an easier poem for young readers than "Carmel Point." The point of the poem is more clearly stated here than in the former one. But even here there is no direct moral or conclusion. The comment on man's insignificance in relation to nature is implied, not stated. The metaphorical comparison of the ocean floor to a giant's house, and the implied danger of "no fit place for a child to play," serve to remind us that the world we inhabit is not really ours, and that the size and force of nature are still beyond man's mastery. He is indeed a child in a giant's house. The force of the "message" is in its metaphorical structure; the message itself is hardly new. Ask your class to make a prose statement of the idea of this poem (they can do it more simply with this one than with the other two) and then compare the poem and the paraphrase. Such an activity is an excellent way of seeing what poetry does.

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INTRODUCTION

This unit logically follows the previous one on the speaker in the poem. In earlier remarks on the speaker, it was mentioned that the dramatic situation of a poem consisted of a speaker and an event, or circumstance. The speaker was defined as a character in a drama. This character, however, does not exist alone, as a separate entity. Of equal importance to the overall effect of the poem is the dramatic situation, the circumstance or predicament in which the speaker finds himself. This concept, which relates so closely to the previous unit, is the central concern in this unit.

The importance of what a character says depends on where or when in the story he says it. It is difficult, for example, to get the full dramatic effect of Romeo's words under Juliet's window unless we realize the situation: he has just met her; their families are mortal enemies; Romeo is subject to banishment if there is more trouble; and he is risking his life to appear under the balcony. Without this knowledge, we lose much of the effect of the speech.

So, too, with much poetry. A full understanding of the poem is impossible until we reconstruct the full dramatic situation in which the voice is speaking. In other words, the circumstance, or the predicament of the poem, determines the effect of the speaking voice. We as readers must be constantly alert to clues which indicate the dramatic sequence which has led up to the words we read. Unlike an audience in a theater, we do not have the complete development of the play to help us.

Consider, for example, Miss Coatsworth's "Night Piece," the third selection in this unit. Here we have one speaker, on stage before us, with no previous action to aid us in understanding. From the clues the speaker gives us, we can reconstruct an entire dramatic scene. The speaker has been the only witness to something mysterious and sinister, during which there were screams. The speaker witnessed the event because (s)he couldn't sleep on account of the loud wind and so got up to walk around; it was late at night and it was cloudy as well as windy. All of this, with very little subjective interpretation, can be seen in the dramatic monologue of the speaker. And without such understanding, the poem is meaningless.

We all reconstruct background with everything we read. The point is to make your students aware that they are doing it, and how much it contributes to their interpretation of the poem. This is the intention of the present unit.

The following poems have been selected because they demonstrate particularly well the importance of the dramatic situation to the overall meaning of the poem. You will want to lead your class to the realization of the importance of the context, or dramatic backdrop, against which the speaker is making his remarks. They should enjoy the detective work involved in reconstructing the "scene of the crime." The fact that these following poems, rather than stating the dramatic situation, merely suggest it, should provide good opportunity for creative interpretation.

DRAMATIC SITUATION

Purpose: To introduce the idea of dramatic situation in a poem, as an aid to understanding the poem.

Selection: "Foul Shot," by Edwin A. Hoey, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 112.

Analysis:

The dramatic situation in "Foul Shot" will be very easy for your students to reconstruct. The title of the poem clearly indicates the type of game being played. The first two lines provide the frame for the situation: the score is tied 60-60 with two seconds to go in the game. We do not know what two teams are playing nor which team has the chance to win if the player makes the foul shot, but these details are not important to the impact of the poem. What is important are the moments just before the player makes his shot in the final seconds of a tie game, no matter which team he is on. All of us have witnessed such a suspenseful moment or can easily imagine it.

The rest of the poem describes in minute detail the motions of the all-important player and his all-important shot. We, along with the hushed crowd, wait suspensefully as the player gets set and sinks the shot. The boys in your class will especially identify with the moments described in the poem.

Discuss the predicament the shooter finds himself in, the suspense-building sequence of details that lead up--slowly, slowly--to the final moment of the successful basket. Perhaps your students will want to try their hand at creating a similar list of details building suspense in the crucial moments of another kind of game--football, baseball, even a last volley in a tennis match. A poem dealing with a similar situation is "Casey at the Bat."

Suggested Questions:

1. Why is this foul shot going to be an important one?

2. How do you know the crowd is silent and why do you think it is silent?

3. What steps does the shooter take before he actually shoots the ball and why?

4. How does he shoot the ball?

5. What does the ball do after it leaves his hands?

6. Why are the first two lines of the poem especially important?

Suggested Activities:

1. Write down what you think was going on inside the shooter's head during the moments of the poem.

2. Write an account of what happened just before the shooter was fouled. How did he get fouled?

3. Write about what happened just after the shooter made the basket. What happened to the crowd? To him? To the other team?

4. Imagine you are a player on the other team during the moments of the poem. What would you be thinking as you watched and waited from your position along the side?

5. Using a crucial moment in another kind of game (baseball, volleyball, football) build up a list of details that describe the all-important play. Don't forget to explain at the beginning what the situation is.

Reading Readiness:

1. (Depending on how sophisticated in sports your class is, you may want to discuss the importance of a foul shot in basketball. Some of the boys can undoubtedly explain enough of the scoring procedure to enable the rest of the children to appreciate the drama of the situation.)

DRAMATIC SITUATION

Purpose: To reinforce the idea of dramatic situation in a poem, as an aid in understanding the poem.

Selection: "Earth," by John Hall Wheelock, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 81.

Analysis:

This short quatrain should be well received by your space-age students, and, because of its dramatic situation, should promote a lively class discussion. The poem shows a speaker, identified as a scientist, making an important discovery and a very "dry" remark about civilization. Only when the poem is viewed in terms of the dramatic situation--the destruction of Earth as seen from Mars--do the speaker's words take on special meaning.

You can lead your students into a dramatic reconstruction of the background to the poem by calling their attention to the speaker's words "That they were able to do it..." By investigating the who and what of that remark, your class should see the grim details suggested by the Martian.

Once most of your children realize the dramatic context of the poem, they will want to consider more closely the notion of civilization. Here, through the use of irony, the poet achieves a rather pointed effect. Your students may not be familiar with the term irony, but they will certainly recognize its use, since it is a device they employ very often themselves. Meaning the opposite of what you say is a rhetorical method learned early in life. With this in mind, your class should notice the interesting play on the word "intelligent." A civilization that can develop rockets and bombs is indeed "intelligent," in one sense of the word; a civilization that has not learned to live peacefully with its own kind is certainly not.

Suggested Questions:

1. What dramatic event has taken place? Where?
2. Who is the speaker? Where is he? What has he seen?
3. What could have caused this event to happen?
4. Why does the astronomer think the people on Earth are intelligent?
5. Do you think the poet agrees with the speaker?

6. What is your attitude toward the intelligence of the Martian society? Would you call theirs a "civilized" society? Why? What about "civilization" on earth? Look up the word in a dictionary. Does it apply to what has happened in the poem? What is your notion of "civilized"?

Suggested Activities:

1. Pretend you are a visitor from another planet. Make a list of some of the most interesting things you find. Write a report about this planet and its people to take back to your home.

2. Do some reading on the opinions of scientists as to life on other planets, especially Mars. What have the recent satellite photographs told us? Share this information with your class.

Reading Readiness:

1. (How much can children understand? Is it fair, is it necessary to suggest the possibility that the earth just might blow up--and that man could be responsible for it?)

2. If the earth ever explodes, what do you think would be the cause?

DRAMATIC SITUATION

Purpose: To further reinforce the idea of dramatic situation, as an aid to understanding a poem.

Selection: "Night Piece," by Elizabeth Coatsworth, from The Creaking Stair. New York: Coward-McCann, 1923.

Analysis:

In terms of the dramatic situation, this poem by Miss Coatsworth is especially interesting. The speaker begins by telling us that what he has seen is beyond imagination. He then proceeds to describe precisely the setting and the circumstances of the event he witnessed. The purpose of such a description is to prepare the reader for the dramatic event which is to occur. The peculiar feature of "Night Piece," however, is that the reader is never told what specifically happened. Here is a case of the dramatic situation determining in the reader's mind the final part of the story. Due to the elaborate description of the setting, the reader infers something foul has happened. Your children should enjoy particularly the detective work that comes with this poem. Not only will they be intrigued by the events of what actually happened, but they will also want to speculate on why the speaker has chosen to remain silent.

The mood, which is essential to this poem, is one of mystery. It is achieved primarily through the poet's use of imagery, a concept with which your students are already familiar. They should quickly recognize the auditory imagery in the words "shrieked," "screamed," and the reference to the wind's "loudness." There are also particularly good visual images of the moon behind the clouds, and of the poet's use of brightness and shadows.

Suggested Questions:

1. Who is the "I" in the poem?

2. What is the importance of the setting? Why do you think the speaker could not sleep?

3. What do you think the person saw? Describe the scene as completely as you can.

4. Why won't the witness explain what has happened?

5. What are some of the auditory images in the poem? How do they add to the mood? What kinds of visual images are present in the poem?

Suggested Activities:

1. Suppose you were directing a TV show on the story in this poem. What would you use for a setting? What about visual effects? Sound effects?

2. Write a story about what the speaker was witness to.

Reading Readiness:

1. Vocabulary: inherit, mantle (verb: good chance for a semantics lesson)

2. What does it feel like to know a very important secret and not be able to tell it to anyone?

Additional Poems:

1. "Earth," by Oliver Herford, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 81.

2. "Rodeo," by Edward Lueders, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 111.

3. "Lullaby," by Robert Hillyer, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 106.

4. "Hunting Song," by Donald Finkel, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 106.

5. "O Captain! My Captain!," by Walt Whitman (text below).

Reading Readiness:

"Earth" (Herford)

1. In a big forest fire all the animals try to run away to safety. What do you think happens to the natural fear the animals have of each other? For example, would a deer still be afraid of the mountain lion? Do they somehow become equal?

2. What is a shooting star? Do you think the earth could ever be a shooting star? What do you think would happen to the creatures on earth if the earth suddenly started flying toward the sun?

3. (The perspective of looking at ourselves from a different view is a difficult one--even for adults. How can you accomplish this perspective with children? Can they look at themselves from the standpoint of a goldfish? a pet dog or cat? a mirror? a school desk? a book? Try it and see.)

"Rodeo"

1. (If you are in rodeo country, readiness will not be much of a problem. Otherwise you may need to impress the children with the violence of riding a furious Brahma bull. A special belt is put around the bull that irritates him. He bucks as long as he has the belt on. The cowboy holds himself on the bull with his legs and one hand. He only has to stay on for eight seconds. Severe injuries are quite common; bruises are taken for granted.)

2. Vocabulary: jaw full of chaw (chewing tobacco), baleful, irresolute

"Lullaby"

1. What is a lullaby? Does it give you a feeling of quietness or one of noise? Why?

2. Can you picture a lake where not an animal, bird, or fish is moving or making a sound? How would you describe the silence?

3. Supposing a boat entered the scene. What is the quietest type of boat you can think of?

"Hunting Song"

1. (Fox hunting isn't very common for most people. A cursory explanation may be sufficient to set the scene. There is something more important in this poem than knowledge of fox hunting.)

2. If a blade of grass could talk, what would it say about a football game that was going on around him? (Again, we're dealing with a perspective of ourselves.)

"O Captain! My Captain!"

1. (Whitman wrote this poem upon hearing of Lincoln's assassination. The captain, of course, is Lincoln; the ship is the United States.)

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up--for you the flag is flung--for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths--for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

--Walt Whitman

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout these discussions of poetry, we have been examining various poetic devices to give us a richer and more complete understanding of the poet and his craft. We have examined diction, to see the special choice and use of language in the creation of a poem. In our consideration of metaphor and simile, we will see how a poet employs the art of comparing one thing to another. In still another lesson, special musical devices, such as rhyme, meter, and onomatopoeia have been stressed. In every discussion, two things have been central to our thinking. One is that poetry is a system of words, a system carefully and consciously developed, made up of many special parts. The second is that by isolating and considering those special parts, the reader can gain a greater understanding of the whole--that is, the poem itself. This second element suggests what might be termed "the poet's problem," that is, how to use those parts to get across his message to the reader. One solution is for the poet to turn to imagery, a poetic device that is a curious combination of the other elements of poetry already familiar to us.

Basically, imagery is nothing more than the use of a concrete detail aimed specifically at one or more of the reader's senses. Most of the imagery employed in poetry is directed at the sense of sight, and therefore called visual imagery, but there are examples and possibilities in poetic imagery that involve all the senses. In fact, imagery consists of a special kind of language called sensuous language--that which appeals to our senses of hearing, touch, smell, taste, as well as our sense of sight. Another type of imagery, more common than that of smell and taste, is thermal imagery, an appeal to our awareness of heat or cold.

Since visual imagery is the most commonly practiced, good examples in English poetry are not difficult to find. Here is one by William Wordsworth:

> This City now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

The concrete details of a city in the early morning, in this case London, give us the visual image. We picture the skyline of a city in the "smokeless air." Auditory imagery is the next most common. It is the attempt by the poet to reproduce certain sounds. Another English poet, John Keats, tries to represent the sound of music. First, he writes of the sound of a trumpet.

> The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide.

Then, the entire orchestra is heard.

The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle drum, and far-heard clarinet
Affray his ears...

The concrete details here are not things that can be seen. They are sounds, represented with words like "snarling," "chide," "boisterous," "clarion." In fact, when reading the lines, you probably were conscious of the meter, and how that adds to the idea of music. This is auditory imagery at its finest. Keats was extremely interested in the use of imagery, and remains one of the great imagists of our language. Look at this next stanza, from his poem "The Eve of St. Agnes," very famous and often quoted for its brilliant imagery.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna, and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

The description of the foods is rich and heavy, and reading this is almost like tasting them. There is also the sense of touch in line 2, and also the sticky suggestion in "jellies soother than the creamy curd," and "lucent syrops." The sense of smell is involved with the words "cinnamon," and "spiced." Perhaps you will not come across poetry so heavily laden with imagery when you are introducing your students to this idea. It does, however, show what possibilities are available, when a skilled poet works carefully with language, and you can begin to heighten your students' awareness of the power of imagery.

Imagery, it must be remembered, is a poetical device and not an end in itself. In this sense it does not differ from some of the other concepts you have been sharing with your students. In fact, as suggested earlier, it is a curious blend of these concepts. It relates to metaphor and simile in that it attempts to involve the reader's power of association. When the reader sees a line like "The white surf sprayed on the black crag," he will picture the ocean, a wave, and a rock. He is constructing a mental image based on the suggestions of the poet's language. Imagery relates to diction in the sense that it is a deliberate and conscious choice and use of certain words. Thus in Alfred Noyes' poem "The Highwayman," the line "Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard" is the selection of certain words to form an auditory image. You will also recognize the use of onomatopoeia here, the sound of the horse's hoofs on the stone inn-yard. Imagery, then, takes advantage of some of the other poetic devices to perform its function. And the function of imagery, of course, is to allow the reader to experience more fully the poet's world.

The lessons that follow have been divided according to the various kinds of poetic imagery. Visual imagery, since it is the most obvious and most frequent, comes first. The three poems included in this section, "Earth," "Swift Things," and "Fireworks," contain some fine pictures for the mind's eye. Auditory imagery is next, and the two poems in this section, "Sonic Boom" and "The Cowboy's Life," provide superb sound effects. The third section contains one example of each of the remaining kinds of imagery: touch, taste, and smell. "Slippery" appeals to our sense of touch, "This Is Just to Say" attempts to involve our taste buds, and "Smells (Junior)" tries to use scent images. "African Sunrise" tries to summarize what the unit says about imagery by showing several different kinds of imagery working together to form a single impression. This chapter concludes with a nonsense poem, "Jabberwocky," which uses language and imagery in a special way, and should delight all of your students.

Suggested Activity for Unit on Imagery:

As you go through the unit on Imagery it may be helpful to keep a list of words or phrases used by the poets which appeal to the various senses. Your students may wish to collect some words or phrases of their own which appeal to the senses and add them to the list.

The following questions might be used to generalize about the use of words to appeal to the senses:

1. How are the words in each list alike? How are they different?

2. Why do you think poets use so many words that appeal to the senses?

VISUAL IMAGERY

Purpose: To demonstrate how a poem can use familiar visual images to make us see things in a new way.

Selection: "Earth," by Oliver Herford, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 81.

Analysis:

We have said that imagery is the use of concrete details which appeal to the senses. We have also said that the most commonly employed imagery is visual. The way visual imagery works is through concrete details which suggest some kind of picture to the reader. Visual imagery is particularly effective if it can make our minds combine familiar things into new and provocative visual patterns. "Earth" is a particularly good example of a poem which does this.

Many of us have stood outside on summer evenings and noticed the beauty of a "shooting star" falling from the sky. But the poet of "Earth" asks, what if the situation were reversed and we were the "shooting star"? We are accustomed to thinking of our earth as something vast and solid we stand on while gazing up at the unfathomable limits of the universe; therefore, the poet's reversal of this visual image is startling. He asks us to look at the earth from some point out in space, almost as though we were on another planet. And, as the lunar astronauts have told us, how small a world we seem then!

Having established this reversed awareness, the poet presents a related visual image that is equally striking--the sight of all earth's living things "shrivelling" off from the face of the globe as it falls through space into the sun. The point the poet is making is obvious: in such a situation, we are all "little crawling things"; the earthly distinctions between ants and philosophers or maggots and millionaires are totally unimportant. Through these unusual visual images, the poet attempts to make us see how foolishly self-centered we are; he gives us a gently ironic lesson in humility.

Suggested Questions:

1. Have you ever seen a shooting star in the night sky? What was your reaction? Did you find the sight pretty or sad?

2. How do you think the earth looked to the astronauts as they stood on the moon? Could they see any of the things men have built, even the tallest skyscrapers?

3. Make a list of all the "living" things the poet says would shrivel off the earth if it fell into the sun. Then arrange the things in order of how "important" you think they are. Compare your list to the poet's. Why do you think he doesn't list things in the same order as you did?

4. The poet Robert Burns once said he wished we all could have the gift "to see ourselves as others see us." Why would this be a "gift"? Does what he said have anything to do with this poem?

5. Have you ever slipped the skin off a tomato that has been dipped in boiling water? What kind of feeling do you get from the thought of everything "shrivelling" off the face of the earth?

Suggested Activities:

1. Show the class a photo of the earth taken from the moon, or a diagram of our solar system, to emphasize the point Herford is making about the earth's relative size in the universe.

2. Show the class pictures of shooting stars and give a simple explanation of their characteristics (speed, light generated by heat, etc.). The contrast between these photos and the one of the earth should provide opportunities for interesting discussion.

Imagery
Teacher

Literature V-VI

VISUAL IMAGERY

Purpose: To show how a poem may use visual images to create an effect of balance or comparison.

Selection: "Swift Things are Beautiful," by Elizabeth Coatsworth, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 101.

Analysis:

There are many effective visual images in Miss Coatsworth's poem on movement, but they are of two distinct types. The first stanza lists various kinds of swift things, and shows them in motion. Most of your students will have no trouble with the visual imagery in this part of the poem. Lines like

> And the lightning that falls
> Bright-veined and clear,

or

> Rivers and meteors,
> Wind in the wheat,

are especially vivid. The second stanza, however, takes up a consideration of "slow things," and may present some difficulty. Since we are trying to imagine motion, and since speed is much more recognizable and dramatic than slowness, the visual images in the second stanza will take more imagination. Consider the very beautiful image in the lines

> The pause of the wave
> That curves downward to spray.

Here we have a visual image of a slow, rolling wave as if the moment were frozen, as in a photograph. Here, as in the idea of a laboring ox, or an opening flower, you will have stressed the gradual motion of slowness. Since Miss Coatsworth's point is that slow things, as well as swift things, are beautiful, she deliberately stresses the visual image of slowness in the second stanza. The progression of these images shows the poet to be skilled in the technique of balance and comparison. She tells us in the first stanza that swift things like horses, meteors, wind, lightning, are beautiful. All these are images of speed. She follows by stating the slow things--oxen, embers, waves--are equally lovely. Here, the mental pictures are of slowness. The force of the poem lies in the implication of the contrast between the two stanzas of the poem.

Suggested Questions:

1. How does a deer move? Describe the flight of a swallow. Compare that movement with a laboring ox. Do you agree that both are beautiful? Explain your answer.

2. What are some phrases you would use to describe the hour of sunset?

3. How many of the swift things mentioned in the poem have you experienced? Which ones? How many of the slow things? Do you agree that these things are all beautiful? What other swift or slow things can you think of?

4. Which of the visual images in the poem did you find most vivid? Why?

Suggested Activities:

1. Draw or paint a picture of one or more of the things the narrator lists in the poem. Try to give the feeling of swiftness or slowness in your drawing.

2. Look around you--in class, at recess, on the way home, out playing--at the simple things that we all take so much for granted. Try and decide if simple things have a kind of beauty. Make a list of the things you discover.

3. Tell what you like about two different things. If you can, make these two things opposites like summer and winter, school and home.

Reading Readiness:

1. The title of this poem is "Swift Things Are Beautiful." Do you agree with the poet?

2. What are some swift things you think are beautiful?

3. Are slow things beautiful?

4. What are some slow things you think are beautiful?

VISUAL IMAGERY

Purpose: To show how a poet can use simple visual comparisons to make a common experience more vivid.

Selection: "Fireworks," by Babette Deutsch, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 109.

Analysis:

Babette Deutsch's "Fireworks" is a simpler poem than it at first appears. It employs some of the same visual elements as Oliver Herford's poem "Earth," but combines them into more fully developed metaphorical patterns.

The two main visual images in the poem are simply descriptions of two different types of fireworks--one a bursting ball of sharply-defined needles, the other an unfolding bell shape dissolving into a sprinkle of dust-like particles. Probably most of your students have seen such displays, but they may need assistance with vocabulary in order to appreciate fully the accuracy of Miss Deutsch's description. Be sure they know what chrysanthemums and bellflowers really look like, and words like abruptly ("suddenly"), circumscribe ("to outline a circle"), and svelte ("smooth and graceful") may need to be explained in the context in which they appear.

The best thing to do is simply ask the class to recall their own sight and sound impressions of this particular experience. By doing this, they should immediately sense the appropriateness of the sight images, and should also have an easier time comprehending the sound images, which are slightly more subtle. What sound do you hear just before a firework explodes in the sky? It isn't sharp like a gunshot or a thunderclap, but a thudding or "clouded" sound. All the poem's sound images are muted in this way: the fireworks "flake" or "fade" away in "sprinkles," or they are "swallowed." Even the "hiss" the ball-shape makes as it dissolves is "svelte," a word which somehow makes one think of velvet. The final image, of night as a sponge soaking up both sights and sounds, sets up a perfectly appropriate final mood for a poem that has been gentle and muted all the way through.

Suggested Questions:

1. Have you ever seen a fireworks display? If so, describe as fully as you can the different types of fireworks you saw. --(Ask about shapes, sounds, multiple displays, etc.)

2. Does this poem talk about all the possible kinds of fireworks?

3. Do you think the comparison of fireworks to unfolding flowers is a good one? Why or why not? --(With a good class, you might use this opportunity to introduce the term metaphor, which comes up soon in a future unit.)

4. Some fireworks make a very sharp, exploding sound as they burst in the sky. Why do you suppose the poet doesn't mention these kinds of fireworks, but concentrates instead on the soft, "tinkly" kinds? --(Touch upon concept of mood or tone.)

5. Has the night ever seemed like a "sponge" to you? How?

Suggested Activities:

1. Write a paragraph describing some exciting event you have seen, using as many visual images as possible. Some suggested topics:

A circus act

A parade

A sporting event

2. Fireworks displays are usually associated with the Fourth of July. Discuss the kinds of visual images that are associated with other special days--Christmas, Memorial Day, Valentine's Day, Easter.

Reading Readiness:

1. Vocabulary: fiesta
circumscribe (do some structural analysis here--circum= around (compare "circle"), scribe= to write or draw)
svelte

2. What kind of feeling do you get when you watch fireworks on the Fourth of July?

3. Can you describe fireworks in one sentence? How would you describe the sound? the sight?

Additional Poems:

"Interlude III," by Karl Shapiro, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 71.

"Fortune," by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 102.

"Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle Received From a Friend Called Felicity," by John Tobias, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 134.

Reading Readiness:

"Interlude III"

1. Vocabulary: gossamer
exquisite
grossness
mote
mite

2. All of us have swatted insects. How many of us have really looked closely at the thing we killed?

3. How large is an insect's leg? Is the leg very powerful?

4. Do you think insects have feelings like humans do?

"Fortune"

1. Vocabulary: fortune cookie
birthday suit
pinochle

2. (You may need to explain that children who live in big cities like New York and Chicago don't always have many opportunities to go swimming. Sometimes a fire hydrant will be turned on so the children can play in the cool water.)

3. In this poem the poet remembers a pleasant thing that happened to him when he was a boy. What are some of the pleasant things you think you will remember when you are an adult?

"Pickle"

1. Vocabulary: unicorn
reluctant

2. (You probably shouldn't dwell on this poem as the remembrances of an adult, other than pointing out that adults often think of the happier times of their youth. Maybe the allusions in the poem to smoking and shooting watermelon seeds will show the children that most adults have succeeded in living through some standard naughtiness.)

Imagery
Teacher

Literature V-VI

AUDITORY IMAGERY

Purpose: To examine a poem whose concrete details appeal strongly to the sense of sound.

Selection: "The Cowboy's Life," by James Barton Adams, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 4.

Analysis:

Auditory imagery is that which appeals to our sense of sound. It differs from visual imagery, in that the concrete details presented to us are things that we can hear rather than see. In this poem about the world of the cowboy, Mr. Adams gives the reader the sound effects associated with life on the range. This effect is gained primarily with musical words like "bawl," "yelping," "growl," and "moan," and all show the importance of onomatopoeia in auditory imagery. In addition to these particular words, which represent the sounds of the livestock, there is also the sound of galloping horses, suggested by the combination of "b," "t," and "r" sounds, and the rhythm of iambs and anapests. This is especially true in the third stanza.

> The rapid beat
> Of his broncho's feet
> On the sod as he speeds along,
> Keeps living time
> To the ringing time
> Of his rollicking cowboy song.

The structure of the poem is very central to its meaning. Stanzas one and three are descriptive, and draw heavily on the auditory images discussed above. Stanzas two and four are contemplative, or speculative, and stress the importance of how the cowboy reacts to his world. Thus we have a representation of the open range, depicted realistically by its sounds, followed by the impression of what the world means to its listener--the cowboy. You might stress this idea of impression by asking your students about the consistant reference to king, royalty, and throne.

Suggested Questions:

1. What are the various sound images of the poem?

2. Demonstrate the sound of a steer. Is the poet's word "bawl" a good choice for this sound? What are some other possible words that would work?

3. Have you ever thought of a coyote's yelp as gay? How would you describe it? Why do you suppose the cowboy thinks it is gay?

4. The poet uses the word "growl" to describe thunder. Is this a good choice? Does this suggest an attitude toward thunder on the part of the speaker? What other words might be used?

5. Use your hands to tap out the rhythm of the third stanza. What does it sound like? Is it appropriate rhythm for the idea of that stanza? Why?

6. Why do you think the cowboy's life is thought of as free? Does this have any connection with the ideas of royalty and king expressed in the poem?

Suggested Activities:

1. Draw or paint a picture suggested by the sounds of this poem.

2. Suppose Mr. Adams wanted to write a poem about a traffic cop in the city. What kind of sounds would be included in this world? Write some of them out.

3. Write a short story about a cowboy's life, with you as the main character. (Teacher could help begin: 1874, Texas, cattle drive, rustlers, storm)

Reading Readiness:

1. The life of an old-time cowboy was very lonesome. What sounds do you think he heard out on the prairie? Do you think he liked those sounds? Would you like them?

Imagery
Teacher

Literature V-VI

AUDITORY IMAGERY

Purpose: To see how a poet uses auditory devices to underline a basic moral attitude.

Selection: "Sonic Boom," by John Updike, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 79.

Analysis:

The auditory imagery should be fairly easy to recognize in this poem about a common occurrence in our age of supersonic aircraft. Undoubtedly, most of your students have heard a sonic boom. Updike describes its noise, "Thump of Doom/Resounds," with a unique combination of "p" and "o" sounds, and its effect with sharp onomatopoeiatic devices, "clap," "snap," "cracked," and "POP." What might be more difficult, however, is the speaker's attitude about his place in the world, and how he has adapted to the civilization of the jet age. He explains that he is no longer bothered by the jet smoke in the sky, and has listened to the "thump," not as a thing of doom, but merely a reality of the laws of physics. There is, however, a note of irony in these words. How are we to ever differentiate between the awful sound and the harmless one? And, if we can, what more can we do but "not look up?" Unless the last few lines are read carefully, the speaker's indifference toward his own destruction may be missed.

Suggested Questions:

1. What are some of the words in the poem to suggest either the actual sound of the sonic boom, or the effects of the sound? --(see general analysis)

2. What other sounds are suggested in the poem? --(baby's cry, and the bomb in the next to last line)

3. What is the attitude of the speaker toward the noise? To whom is the word "relax" directed? --(to himself) What is his attitude toward nuclear attack? Why do you suppose he says that if a real "POP" comes, he won't look up? How will he know it is real? --(for all of these, see general analysis) Does the story of the boy crying wolf apply here? How? (discuss)

4. The speaker explains sonic boom as "Some pilot we equip/Giving the speed of sound the slip." Is this a good description? What actually happens to cause sonic boom?

5. Why does the poet use sound images? Would the poem have the same effect if he used visual images?

Suggested Activities:

1. Updike has taken a common modern phenomenon and written a good poem about it. Select some other noisy aspect of modern life--jack-hammer, pile-driver, logging trucks--and write a description of it. State why or how you have grown not to fear its sound.

2. Investigate the scientific explanation for a sonic boom. Make a report to your class on what you find.

Reading Readiness:

1. You've all heard sonic booms. Does this sound frighten you? Should it?

2. Have you gotten used to hearing sonic booms?

3. Do you see any danger in getting used to sonic booms?

Additional Poems:

"The Charge of the Light Brigade," by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (text below)

"In Just-Spring," by E. E. Cummings, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 96.

"The Bells," by Edgar Allen Poe (text below)

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
    Rode the six hundred.
"Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
    Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not, tho' the soldier knew
    Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
    Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
    Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
    Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
    All the world wonder'd.
Plunged in the battery smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not,
    Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
    Volley'd and thunder'd;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
    Left of the six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

--Alfred, Lord Tennyson

THE BELLS

I

Hear the sledges with the bells--
Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells--
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II

Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!
Through the balmy air of night
How they ring out their delight!
From the molten-golden notes,
And all in tune,
What a liquid ditty floats
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!
Oh, from out the sounding cells
What a gust of euphony voluminously wells!
How it swells!
How it dwells!
On the Future! how it tells
Of the rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells--
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

III

Hear the loud alarum bells--
Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!
In the startled ear of night
How they scream out their affright!
Too much horrified to speak,
They can only shriek, shriek,
Out of tune,

In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,
Leaping higher, higher, higher,
With a desperate desire,
And a resolute endeavor
Now--now to sit, or never,
By the side of the pale-faced moon.
Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
What a tale their terror tells
Of despair!
How they clang, and clash, and roar!
What a horror they outpour
On the bosom of the palpitating air!
Yet the ear it fully knows,
By the twanging,
And the clanging,
How the danger ebbs and flows;
Yet the ear distinctly tells,
In the jangling,
And the wrangling,
How the danger sinks and swells,
By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells--
Of the bells--
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells--
In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!

IV

Hear the tolling of the bells--
Iron bells!
What a world of solemn thought their melody compels!
In the silence of the night,
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of their tone!
For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a groan.
And the people--ah, the people--
They that dwell up in the steeple,
All alone,
And who tolling, tolling, tolling,
In that muffled monotone,
Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone--
They are neither man nor woman--
They are neither brute nor human--
They are Ghouls:
And their king it is who tolls;
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,
Rolls
A paean from the bells!

And his merry bosom swells
With the paean of the bells!
And he dances, and he yells;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the paean of the bells--
Of the bells:
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the throbbing of the bells--
Of the bells, bells, bells--
To the sobbing of the bells;
Keeping time, time, time,
As he knells, knells, knells,
In a happy Runic rhyme,
To the rolling of the bells--
Of the bells, bells, bells--
To the tolling of the bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells--
Bells, bells, bells--
To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

--Edgar Allen Poe

Reading Readiness:

"The Charge of the Light Brigade

1. Vocabulary: half a league (a league is about 3 miles)
light brigade (a large group of soldiers whose armament is light; that is, at the time of this poem, they did not have cannons or even rifles. They fought with swords and pistols.)
battery (in this use, a group of cannons)

2. (You might want to set the scene. The light brigade had been sent into the valley to drive out a group of enemy soldiers. Some people have said that the officers had made a bad mistake, because it was not deemed wise to send a group of lightly armed men against heavy armament.)

"In Just-Spring"

1. (Don't fuss about the form of the poem. Let the children discover that Cummings writes this way because that is the way he wants you to read his poem.)

2. What are some of the things that make you feel good in the spring?

3. Supposing you lived in a large city. What signs of spring would you hear?

"The Bells"

1. (By all means, introduce the word tintinnabulations; it is a delightful word.)

2. Vocabulary: euphony
brazen
turbulency
expostulation
palpitating
monotone
paean
Runic

3. (Poe achieved an auditory sensation in this poem. You might have the children list the different types of bells they have heard. See if they can associate some feeling with the different bells. For example, the bell on a bicycle provides a different sensation from the school bell.)

Imagery
Teacher

Literature V-VI

TACTILE IMAGERY

Purpose: To see how a poet enriches our experience by suggesting the idea of physical contact with an object.

Selection: "Slippery," by Carl Sandburg, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 70.

Analysis:

Tactile imagery is aimed at awakening our sense of touch, and "Slippery" is an example of one poet's attempt to suggest, by means of language, the idea of physical contact with an object. The sense of touch is a particularly difficult one to describe, and we find ourselves using abstractions such as rough, or smooth, or perhaps bumpy. In order to sharpen our description of this sensation, we rely heavily on comparison, that is something feels like something else. In this sense tactile imagery comes very close to metaphor and simile. We have many examples of this from our everyday speech: "The edge was razor-sharp," or "Her hand felt like sand-paper." In his poem "Slippery," Carl Sandburg depends on one comparison to achieve his meaning. He compares the feel of a wet baby to the feel of a wet fish. Both are wriggling and slick; both are, as the title indicates, slippery. The reference to "fish child" makes the idea of holding a naked baby, fresh from the bath, particularly vivid.

Suggested Questions:

1. What makes the comparison between a fish and a small baby, just after her bath, especially interesting? How important is the word "wriggles" to the concept of touch imagery? What does this word suggest?

2. The poet tried for a certain effect by using the words "fish child." What was that effect? What would be the effect if he used the word "thistle?" Can you think of some other words that suggest certain kinds of touch?

Suggested Activities:

1. Write a paragraph describing the feel and touch of something, but do not mention the name of the object. Read it to your classmates and see if your description allows them to identify the object. If they guess after the first reading, you have done a good job with language.

2. A fish wriggling in one's hand is a very definite feeling. Try describing as completely as possible the feeling of one of the following:

a) chewing a jaw-breaker

b) picking up a handful of spaghetti

c) diving into an ice-cold river

d) walking on a gravel road barefooted

Reading Readiness:

1. What is the slipperiest thing you can think of?

Additional Poem:

"The Centaur," by May Swenson, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 54.

Reading Readiness:

"The Centaur"

1. (Do children still make horses out of branches and old belts? Maybe you could find out.)

2. When you are playing a "pretend" game, do you feel that you're doing something real? If you play cowboys, do you feel like a cowboy? If you play war, do you feel like a soldier? If you are pretending to ride a horse, what do you do?

3. What happens to your "pretend self" when a parent interrupts?

OLFACTORY IMAGERY

Purpose: To examine a poem whose point depends upon images appealing to the sense of smell.

Selection: "Smells (Junior)," by Christopher Morley, from Poems. New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1929.

Analysis:

Olfactory imagery is imagery which appeals specifically to our sense of smell. In "Smells (Junior)", Christopher Morley uses olfactory imagery to suggest that certain smells are associated with certain people. The distinctive scents of tobacco, books, lavender, soap, and hot buttered toast identify certain members of the household. Even the family dog is described according to his smell.

> Shandy, my dog, has a smell of his own
> (When he's been out in the rain he smells most);

It has been suggested that fifth and sixth graders might object to the rather juvenile vocabulary of this poem. This would be unfortunate, since the language of the poem is deliberately "childish," to suggest the point of view of the speaker, who is, as hinted in the title, a junior member of the household. Perhaps a good beginning approach to this poem might be a discussion of the level of the language, and a guess at the age of the speaker. The word "Nannie" will provide a very good clue, not only to the age of the speaker, but also to his or her social environment. A child with a nannie and a cook has limited access to his parents and might indeed only see his father smoking and reading.

Suggested Questions:

1. As the title indicates, the details in this poem are directed at our sense of smell. Point to some of the "scent" images in the poem. Select one you think is especially good and justify your choice.

2. The speaker in the poem has associated certain smells with certain people. How do these smells suggest what kind of personalities these people have? What kind of a job do you think Father has? Why? What kind of a person is Mother? Nanny?

3. Katie the cook, according to the speaker, has the most splendid of all the smells. Do you suppose her smell has anything to do with the way she treats the speaker? Explain. --(Answers may vary here, but it seems clear that Katie the cook is a soft touch for the old between meal hand-out.)

4. The poem seems to suggest that there are masculine and feminine smells. Do you agree? What are they?

5. What is the smell of a book? Do you know of other objects that have a particular smell? A baseball glove? A coffee jar? See if you can start your own list.

Suggested Activities:

1. Describe the smells associated with your favorite drive-in restaurant.

2. Write a story that includes all of the members of your family including pets. You might set the story around the dinner table, or in the family car.

3. Look up some information about the poet, Christopher Morley. Make a report to the class.

Reading Readiness:

1. Vocabulary: lavender (the odor, from an aromatic plant)
nannie (a glorified, live-in baby sitter)

2. (Are children aware of the smells in their houses, or are the homes so antiseptic that no smells are available? With commercial emphasis on deodorants, do people still have distinctive odors? It would be interesting to find out.)

Additional Poem:

"Oregon Winter," by Jeanne McGahey, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 125.

Reading Readiness:

"Oregon Winter"

1. (The poem describes Oregon winter very well, but do children share the rather peaceful winter drowsiness that pleases the poet? You might want to find out.)

Imagery
Teacher

Literature V-VI

TASTE IMAGERY

Purpose: To examine a poem which makes us experience the sense of taste.

Selection: "This Is Just to Say," by William Carlos Williams, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 60.

Analysis:

This simple, pleasant poem is a superb example of the use of imagery which appeals directly to our sense of taste. Written in the form of a note, probably stuck to the refrigerator door, it explains in very plain terms, that the plums were irresistible. The effect of the words "Forgive me," makes the sense of temptation even greater, and adds to the alluring quality of the plums. The words "delicious," "sweet," and "cold" leave us with a final impression of how good the plums must have tasted.

Suggested Questions:

1. This poem is written in the form of an apology. How do you feel about what the speaker did? Why? What reasons does the speaker give for stealing the plums?

2. Identify the "I" and the "you" in the poem. Was this apology a spoken or a written message? How can you tell?

3. Tell about a food you have taken from the refrigerator. Describe its feel and then how it tastes.

Suggested Activities:

1. Creative drama--Act out the taking of some food from the refrigerator; bite into it, swallow it, and react to the taste. Try to get the class to guess what you are eating.

2. Make a list of five kinds of food. Describe, in as much detail as possible, the taste of each of them.

Reading Readiness:

1. Do you ever "raid" the refrigerator? What do you usually look for when you do?

2. If you ate a dish of fruit your mother put in the refrigerator, would you write a note telling what you did? What could you say on the note?

Additional Poem:

"April," by Marcia Masters, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 99.

Reading Readiness:

"April"

1. Vocabulary: magenta
gait

2. What sort of things usually happen in April?

3. Do you feel any different in April compared with how you feel in January? Why?

IMAGERY (General)

Purpose: To show how many different types of images can operate in a poem to present a single, unified impression.

Selection: "African Sunrise," by Gertrude May Lutz, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 46.

Analysis:

Gertrude May Lutz's "African Sunrise" is a good poem in which to examine the way many different kinds of sense images work together to create a single dominant impression. In this case, the mood is one of torpor and desolation. The caravan, rather than anticipating the oncoming morning, rises slowly and reluctantly to recommence its long, endless trek across the desert.

There is a subtle but definable time progression in the poem: in the first stanza, night has not quite ended (the "last star" is just setting), but already the sharp desert winds are whipping sand through the caravan's resting place. The tactile force of "parrot-winds" which have beaks to nip the date palms will hardly be lost on your students.

The second stanza focuses on the camels, those remarkable burden-bearers of the desert. The poet skillfully uses simple visual, tactile, auditory, and olfactory imagery to suggest the camels' unwillingness to rise to meet the morning. Have your class identify and comment upon the various images in this stanza. For instance, what feeling is conveyed by the phrase "beeswax" eyes (the term may need to be defined for them to see the notion of heaviness embodied here), and by the image of the camels' spread knees "pock-marking the sand"? Though students may not know the camel's reputation for being a particularly smelly animal, they should have no trouble sensing the olfactory force of the "odor of underbelly" camels emit.

In the third stanza, the sun at last appears, and it burns so much it is like a hot coin on one's eyelids. This vivid image is both visual and tactile; moreover, it is the only image in the poem which even faintly suggests the presence of human figures. These humans are silent--there is none of the hustle and bustle of morning activity that we associate with "happier" trades--and the complete silence just makes the desolation greater. The only sounds we hear are the complaints of the camels and the whipping wind. The last sight we have is of the vast desert stretching out before the caravan, as it senses the long, weary hours to be endured before the chance to rest will come again.

Suggested Questions:

1. Have you ever been in a desert sandstorm, or watched one on television or in the movies? Describe what it was like.

2. What do you know about camels? Why are they the "perfect" animal to use for long desert marches? Do you know anything about their temper or personality?

3. What kinds of sounds do you usually associate with getting up on Saturday morning? --(Children playing, grass being mowed, mother bustling around the house, etc.) Would you say these are "happy" sounds? How do they compare to the sounds in this poem?

4. Have you ever tried to pick up a coin or some other piece of metal that had been lying in the sun? How did it feel? Can you imagine how a hot coin would feel if it were pressed against your eyelids?

5. What other images in the poem actually make you feel you are touching something, or being touched?

6. Find and bring to class pictures of caravans crossing the desert. Do the pictures help you understand the physical feelings described in the poem?

Suggested Activities:

1. Assign the class an essay comparing the uses and habits of the camel to those of some other animal--for instance, a horse or a mule.

2. If possible, show the class a film of a caravan, or merely one of the desert itself. Then discuss how the film does or does not correspond to the impressions presented by the poem.

3. Have someone give a detailed report on caravans--equipment needed, how routes are determined, what kinds of people go on caravans, why this method of travel is chosen over some other method, etc.

Reading Readiness:

1. Would you expect a sunrise in Africa to be any different from a sunrise in the United States?

2. What would be different?

Imagery
Teacher

Literature V-VI

IMAGERY (General)

Purpose: To see how image patterns can be discovered, even in poems which are "nonsense" poems.

Selection: "Jabberwocky," by Lewis Carroll, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 22.

Analysis:

A delightful and amusing poem, "Jabberwocky" should provide you with some material for a lively class discussion. Since, by now, your class will be familiar with the various kinds of imagery, and how they work, they will have no trouble identifying the patterns of imagery in this poem. The interesting thing here, of course, is that none of Carroll's descriptive words means anything, at least on the denotative level. He has purposely used nonsense words strictly for their sound, and for what they suggest their meaning might be. Notice, however, how easy it is to construct images out of the material Carroll gives us. The lines

> The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
> Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
> And burbled as it came,

suggest vivid visual and auditory images, although no one is quite sure of the meaning. You might begin discussion with a question asking for a description of the Jabberwock. Students will respond quickly and, of course, the monster will come in all shapes and sizes. You might then proceed with "slithy toves," "vorpal blade," "galumphing" --the list is considerable. The nonsense words of "Jabberwocky" provide an enjoyable lesson, a wonderful opportunity for children to do some imaginative thinking, and a good review of the concept of imagery, and how it works in poetry.

Suggested Questions:

1. Describe the jabberwock. The bandersnatch.

2. Try to imagine the Tulgey Wood. What colors do you see? What kinds of trees grow there?

3. Describe what it is like to be in "uffish thought."

4. What is a "vorpal blade"?

5. Lewis Carroll doesn't tell us, but can you determine where and when this nonsensical battle took place? Describe the situation. Why do you think so?

6. Which of the senses does this poem appeal to? Why?

Reading Readiness:

1. (It would indeed be difficult to arrange some background of experiences in preparation to read "Jabberwocky." Its charm lies in the nonsense words, and the less fuss the teacher makes about the meaning of the poem, the more probable will be the children's enjoyment. It might be noted that all of the nonsense words involve quite pure (traditional) phoneme-grapheme relationships. A point could be made here if it would not interfere with the enjoyment of the poem.)

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of allusion is a fairly simple one, and you should have little trouble in getting your class to understand it. It can be defined as a reference, either specific or implied, to a person, a place, an event, a literary work, with which the writer expects the reader to be familiar, e.g., "Bethlehem," "Aladdin's lamp," "sour grapes," "good Samaritan," "Waterloo," etc. In its broadest sense it is any reference which need not be explained; more commonly, the term is applied to some specific reference.

Allusion is a sort of verbal short-cut. One way to illustrate the concept to your students, and to arouse their interest, is to point out to them that this device, like all the others in these lessons, is in their own common usage--that poets merely make more conscious and careful use of those resources of language which everyone uses. In discussion, you might want to point out how common allusion is in everyday situations. The sarcastic gibe on the playground ("Who do you think you are, Babe Ruth?"); the reference to a comic strip character ("He's a sort of Charlie Brown type"); the reference to stock narrative cliches ("He's the good guy in the white hat")--all these are allusions based on the assumption that our listener will recognize the reference. Without allusion, we would have a lot more explaining to do.

The assumption on which the use of allusion is based--that the reader will recognize the reference--has several implications for the study of the concept, especially with younger children. The first is that the use of allusion depends on a common "cultural heritage," to use the standard phrase. Earlier, writers could be more secure in their assumptions: the Christian tradition, the classical and Norse mythologies, significant historical events, and the classics of literature. Today, for assorted reasons, that security is gone. As teachers know better than anyone else, it is no longer possible to count on any given child in any given classroom being familiar with any given idea. So allusions to "sour grapes" or "Aladdin's lamp" quite likely now signal nothing to half your class, for they know neither Aesop nor the Arabian Nights. In a heterogeneous culture, allusion suffers.

To compound the problem, there is the inescapable inexperience of your students due to their youth. Allusions familiar to the adult are beyond the fifth or sixth grader simply because he hasn't read or learned enough yet. While it may be disappointing to find elementary school children who fail to understand a reference to "sour grapes," it is silly to be depressed by their unfamiliarity with references to, say, Waterloo, Marathon, Hamlet, or Ahab.

Then why bother? Simply because the idea is vastly important. It is important for the study and enjoyment and interpretation of literature, because so much literature depends on allusion. It is important for basic communication, because frequently tone and attitude are conveyed through

allusion. For instance, when one child says, "Nice going, Babe Ruth," to another who has just struck out, the sarcasm lies in the allusion. It is important for any understanding, literary or not, of such indirect forms of discourse as irony or satire, which are based on our recognition of the writer's inversion of normal values. It is important because it is your students' first introduction to the idea of "cultural heritage," an idea which extends beyond the bounds of literary or historical knowledge to include such things as our shared views on the nature of man, his function in society, the purpose and authority of political institutions, and everything else. Argument and disagreement over civil liberties, for example, imply a shared cultural heritage and values; you wouldn't even be able to argue them with Attila the Hun. (And there is another good illustration of the value of allusion.)

But to return to more immediate considerations. Allusions can function in a variety of ways. It can, as we have said, operate as a sort of short-cut, and in this way shares some of the characteristics of connotation. A reference to "sour grapes" capitalizes on all the associations of the Aesop fable and the moral it illustrates, in the same way that "Babe Ruth" uses the connotations of the great athletic hero and power hitter. The connotations of most allusions are fixed: the Duke of Wellington gained undying fame by his victory over Napoleon, but when we say of someone, "He met his Waterloo," we never imply by that allusion a great victory.

Another way in which allusion functions, and one which your students will immediately recognize, is in <u>parody</u>. Is there a child in your class who has not sung "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the burning of the school?" Probably not, though it would be interesting to see how many of them recognized the parody. At any rate, parody depends for its effect on our recognition of the allusion to the original. Parody is most frequently used for light humor, but can occasionally be adapted to more serious purposes. A third way in which allusion is frequently used is to take a traditional narrative and use it as a point of reference for a variation on the situation, as in "The Builders" in this chapter.

The selections that follow illustrate most of the ways in which allusion can work. Your students should enjoy exploring the ways in which this device operates, not only in literature but in their own lives as well.

PARODY

Purpose: To teach the idea of allusion, with particular reference to its basic function in parody.

Selection: "Sing a Song of Sixpence," Anonymous (text below).

SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE

Sing a song of dirty air, and smog
that burns the eye;
Four and twenty blackbirds baked up
in the sky;
When the factory belched its smoke,
The blackbirds ceased to sing:
Air pollution isn't good for any
living thing.

--Anonymous

Analysis:

When introducing children to the concept of allusion it is important that the selection chosen is one which everyone will understand. Mother Goose rhymes are familiar to all children and there will be few who cannot recite "Sing a Song of Sixpence" in the original form. Your students should be amused by the modern variation on the dangers of air pollution--a "relevant" topic.

The writer's version assumes not only familiarity with Mother Goose but a knowledge of such ecological problems as air pollution. It might be interesting to point out to them that the allusion in this little verse works both ways. They enjoy the parody of the original version, because they know both; but to their parents, when they were children, this version would have been unintelligible: "pollution," or "smog," in this context, would have been meaningless. Allusion, then, can be to more than just a single specific thing. It can be to a whole body of knowledge or experience--the "cultural heritage" mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

The central point of this short poem is the introduction of the idea of allusion. But you may also wish to spend a little time on the idea of parody. A parody is a deliberate imitation of a literary work that burlesques or makes fun of the original. Children use parody frequently in their daily lives, composing parodies of TV commercials, school or popular songs, slogans, and the like. Your students will probably have sung parodies of familiar songs, as suggested above. Each group of children seems to think that they have discovered an entirely new art form when they first hear a parody. Since parody is the basis for a good deal of humorous writing, you will want to point out to your class that jokes, poems, and songs based on the device are funny only because we understand the allusion that had been made.

A good way to introduce the lesson would be to ask the students to identify the various allusions you make, including this one. It could be a game: who can identify the most allusions? Ike, Honest Abe, sour grapes, Old Glory, the prodigal son, Old Ironsides--the list is endless.

Suggested Questions:

1. You were probably amused by this poem. Why? What does it refer to--in other words, what does the writer of this poem expect you to know that increases your amusement? --(Introduce the term allusion. The humor of the poem depends on our recognition of the allusion.)

2. Pretend that your parents, when they were children, were given this poem to read. What allusions in it would they have failed to understand?

3. How many of these allusions can you recognize? "Who's been eating my porridge?" "Oh, Granny, what big teeth you have!" "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." --(Etc. Play with the allusions until they get the idea: a reference based on shared experience or common knowledge.)

4. Do you know any different words to such songs as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" or "When Johnnie Comes Marching Home Again"? There is a special word we give to such allusions as these and "Sing a Song of Sixpence." --(Introduce the term parody. Be sure they understand it.)

5. Can you think of ways we use allusions in our everyday speech?

Suggested Activities:

1. Write a parody of a Mother Goose rhyme as a class project. Sample:

Hey diddle diddle,
Mr. Spock is a riddle.
His ears have jumped over his eyes.
He might have been cuter
But his mind's a computer
And that's handier out where he flies!

2. Keep a bulletin board of all the allusions you can find in your daily reading, or all the ones you use or hear in conversation. How many allusions can you find in advertising? (Hint: automobile salesmen are shown in ads as wearing white hats. Why? The flying horse of the Mobil Gasoline company is a reference to Pegasus, the flying horse of Greek mythology. Can they find others?)

Additional Poems:

1. "Little Miss Muffet," by Paul Dehn (Pickle, p. 80).

2. "Hey Diddle Diddle," by Paul Dehn (Pickle, p. 80).

ALLUSION

Purpose: To develop the concept of allusion as a key to understanding.

Selection: "The Builders," by Sara Henderson Hay (Pickle, p. 40).

Analysis:

This poem is singularly rich in implications, though not beyond the grasp of elementary school children. Here allusion functions differently than in the "Blackbirds" parody. The reference is never directly stated, and the poem is a variation on a familiar narrative rather than a parody of it.

To the reader unfamiliar with the story of the Three Little Pigs this poem would be completely obscure. Indeed, to the child familiar only with the Walt Disney version of the story in which the three little pigs are saved, the poem would be obscure. This is another illustration of the difficulty of the use of allusion in a heterogeneous society. Probably the best way to teach the poem would be to begin with a reading of the original version of the story.

Relying on the reader's familiarity with the story, the author has created a definite character. Be sure your class understands that it is the surviving pig speaking, probably after his meal of boiled wolf. What sort of person is pig #3? Encourage your students to find evidence in the poem for their character analysis. They should be able to identify the colloquial diction ("Awright," "crummy yellow shack"), the holier-than-thou attitude in the first and last lines, the general tone of smug, self-righteous self-justification.

We spoke in the introduction of the idea of cultural heritage extending to shared values in a society. This poem is an excellent illustration of that point, if you feel your class is ready for it. Ask them what they think the author thinks of the character she has created. Is she critical of the pig's attitude of non-involvement? If the original story is usually interpreted as a sermon on prudence and foresight, how has she shifted its implications? Try to get them to see that the only way the audience can interpret the author's attitude towards pig #3 is through the assumption of shared cultural values, in which the smug self-preservation of the pig is open to criticism.

Suggested Questions:

1. Who is speaking? How do you know?

2. Discuss the use of allusion in this poem. How does it differ from "Blackbirds" poem?

3. Do you use allusions in everyday situations? (He's built like "Wilt the Stilt"--Verrry interesting--He's a Dennis the Menace)

4. What kind of person is the speaker? How do you know?

5. Do you think he cared about his brothers? Why or why not?

6. How do you think Sara Henderson Hay feels about the third little pig? On what are you basing your opinion?

7. Why do you think the author used "awright" and "crummy" in her poem?

Suggested Activities:

1. Tell "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" from the point of view of one of the bears. Or "Peter Rabbit" from the point of view of Mr. MacGregor.

2. Write a theme telling why you think the story of the three little pigs is a favorite of young children.

3. Write a story about an animal which you could read to a first grade student.

4. Write a paper discussing why the two pigs didn't come to their brother for help.

Reading Readiness:

1. (After reading the original "Three Little Pigs" to the class, have the children discuss the third pig. What was his character? Would you like to have him for a friend? A relative? A neighbor? Why or why not?)

"CULTURAL" ALLUSION

Purpose: To teach the students the idea of allusion as it applies to a shared cultural heritage (see introduction).

Selection: "Central Park Tourney," by Mildred Weston (Pickle, p. 47).

Analysis: Vocabulary: tourney

Days of yore with knights on gaily-caparisoned steeds, jousting on the fields of combat. The lances gleaming in the sun and the earth quivering under the hoofbeats of the onrushing horses. These were the tourneys of old. Mildred Weston has written of another type of tournament and one that could be just as deadly. Cars rushing at each other in the darkness, each two dashing forward to their moment of meeting, passing, and then two more taking up the challenge.

Children might enjoy this poem simply because it is rich in visual imagery. The "long spear lights" piercing the darkness as the cars hurtle by. From "dusk to dawn" the lights brighten, fade, disappear, and others rush to take their place. The cycle is repeated over and over again. The tourney goes on.

However, "Central Park Tourney" will be much more exciting if the children have some knowledge of the tournaments of olden days. Then they will have two pictures for the "mind's eye." One will be a composite from television, movies, and stories--the other must be captured by the imagination.

In this poem the allusion is drawn from the history and literature of another time. It is ours because we share this heritage.

You may wish to begin the study of this poem with some readiness questions. For instance, your children should know what and where Central Park is, and its reputation as a dangerous place to drive. They will need to know what a tourney was, and the idea of knights with lances trying to hit each other.

Suggested Questions:

1. Why do you think this poem is titled "Central Park Tourney"? What sort of allusion is the author making? What do you have to know to "get" the poem?

2. How could a car be like an armored knight? Compare the two.

3. How were the tourneys of old different from the one described in the poem?

4. Why did the knights want to participate in the jousting?

5. Why do you think the people in the "Central Park Tourney" entered the contest?

6. What is the figure of speech that describes the lights as "long spears"?

Suggested Activities:

1. Read a description of a tournament from "Robin Hood" or "Knights of the Round Table."

2. List some tournaments which take place now. Discuss how they are alike and how they differ from those of the early days.

3. Make a report of the types of contests which made up the tournaments of the Middle Ages.

4. Art activity--Design a shield such as the knights of old used and choose your own coat of arms.

5. Stage a tournament using P. E. activities such as the rope climb, races, wrestling, etc., for the feats of daring.

6. Describe a football game in terms of a medieval tournament.

Reading Readiness:

1. (By all means, set the stage with the referent of jousting tournaments. The thrilling final scenes from Ivanhoe and Men of Iron would be good.)

Additional Poem:

1. At the time of this writing, Moody's "Six White Horses" is a popular song. It depends entirely on our recognition of the allusions to John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, and the common fact of their assassination. Your children may have heard it and remember it, or you might find similar allusions in current songs.

2. "CHEOPS"

What are the hopes of man? Old Egypt's King
Cheops erected the first pyramid
And largest, thinking it was just the thing
To keep his memory whole, and mummy hid;
But somebody or other, rummaging,
Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops.

--Lord Byron

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS for students having difficulty understanding the concept.

Some students need to spend additional time with examples of the concept being developed. Often their own examples help clarify ideas for them.

1. One of the activities following the discussion of "Blackbirds" was to write a parody of a Mother Goose rhyme as a class project. For students having difficulty they might write their own. In a small group discussion have them answer the following questions:

   How was your parody different from the original rhyme?

   Why was it funny?

   What allusion did you use? (You may need to bring out an example from the parody written by the class.)

2. Following "The Builders" it is suggested that students might tell "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" from the point of view of one of the bears.

   Each student might tell his story to a small group. The group can then decide:

   Who is speaking?

   How do you know?

   What kind of person is the speaker?

   How does the story differ from the original?

   How do your stories differ from each other?

   How was allusion used in each of these?

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Simile
Teacher

Literature V-VI

INTRODUCTION

As a good cook uses seasoning to enhance the delicate flavor of a dish, so a poet uses simile to bring out more vividly the essence of a poem. This figure of speech is fairly simple for children to understand because they use similes so frequently in their normal conversation. "I'm happy as a lark," "I'm madder than a hornet."

With the introduction of simile, your students will be moving into a new area of the study of poetry. Rhyme, rhythm, metrics, and the like are a more or less mechanical system of repetition and variation in sound and beat. Diction and imagery are simply a more precise and controlled use of words than the average person normally bothers with. With simile, however, we move into an area of investigation of what is, in a sense, the essence of the poetic vision: figurative language. This is like that, says the poet, comparing a rosebud to a feather bed or a wasp to a leopard or his love to a red, red rose. Illogical and not true, but in the statement of similarity between unlike objects lies the freshness of vision and heightened perception which is one of the main aims of poetic communication. You might want to explore with your class how much we depend on comparison--the essence of simile and metaphor--for vividness, intensification, and emphasis. Here is as good a place as any to have your students begin to see that "average" people use all the literary devices writers use, that the only difference is that writers are more conscious and careful of their use of these devices.

Figurative language is a trope or turn of speech, broadly defined as any way of saying something other than the dead, dull, denotative way. Classical rhetoricians listed literally scores of tropes, with which, fortunately, we need not concern ourselves. Of the various tropes which it is still useful to distinguish in the study of poetry, metaphor and simile are by far the most important. They can be defined as those figures of speech in which one thing is compared to another dissimilar one. We need hardly go into a discussion of the range of effect, control of tone, and potential for imagery available through the use of such a device. A little reflection on the part of your students will let them see that there is quite a difference between "My love is like a red, red rose" and "My love is like a rotting weed;" or between "White as new-fallen snow" and "White as an old scar;" and that all these are more vivid than a simple statement.

Technically, simile is that form of comparison between unlike objects in which the comparison is explicitly stated, usually by the use of "like," "as," or "than." Your students should have little trouble recognizing similes when they see them, and noting the heightened vividness such comparisons afford, as well as the imaginative pleasure we get from sharing in the poet's originality of perception. The recognition of the device is the first step in their own imaginative perception and their heightened awareness of the potential of language.

In the poems that follow in this section, we introduce the idea of simile, and suggest some questions and activities that will encourage your students to become more aware of the device. But most important is to let them play with words, make their own associations, create their own similes, see their own fresh relationships.

SIMILE

Purpose: To introduce the kind of figurative comparison in which the comparative words ("like," "as," or "than") are explicitly stated, and to give students practice in recognizing and constructing similes.

Selection: "The Fly," by Walter de la Mare, from Songs of Childhood. London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1942.

Analysis:

The poem itself needs little discussion. Four simple quatrains with a rhyme scheme abcb. If you have a bright class, some of them might recognize the typical ballad stanza in the rhyme scheme and metrical structure. A good place to review such things is here.

As an introduction to later ideas, you might explore with them how the poem is arranged--its rhetorical structure, in other words. Again, it is an obvious and simple situation. The poet makes his basic statement in the first two lines, and then develops it throughout the rest of the poem by listing a series of examples cast in the form of similes. This is one of the most basic patterns of organization of any idea, and could have some rewarding carry-over in student composition of a poem or a paragraph.

Most important, the poem gives quite a range of simile for examination. Once your students get the idea (which shouldn't take more than two minutes), they can go further into some of the comparisons stated in the poem. The "hair like golden wire," for instance, is about as simple as you can get. Size is the main point here, with perhaps a suggestion of tactile comparison (what is soft to us might well be stiff and wire-like to a fly). Much more complex in its comparison is the wasp-leopard association. There is the same bold coloring, the same sense of danger from a predatory creature, the same sense of sudden attack. The idea of size disappears, and what might almost be called a psychological comparison takes its place.

Interesting as well, if your students are sufficiently aware of syntax, is the elliptical suppression of the comparative word in the first two lines of the final stanza. The series of fully developed similes in the previous stanzas prepares us for this construction in the final one.

Before actually studying the poem, discuss the use and formation of similes with your class. As a preliminary, give them a short list of phrases to complete, such as the following:

as happy as _____ (a lark)

as white as _____ (snow)

softer than _____ (satin, silk)

as dead as _____ (a doornail, a stone)

fresh like a _____ (daisy)

as cool as a _____ (cucumber)

blind as a _____ (bat)

sharp as a _____ (tack)

as clean as a _____ (whistle)

nutty as a _____ (fruitcake)

as dry as _____ (a bone, dust)

eyes like _____ (stars)

teeth like _____ (pearls)

lips like _____ (cherries)

lighter than _____ (air)

In most cases, students will fill in the blanks with the stereotypes we have given in parentheses. Let them add to the list; they should be able to think of many examples from their daily conversation. Try to get them to realize that most of these comparisons are clichés--phrases so over-used that they have lost all vividness and freshness. Ask them to substitute new comparisons which are not clichés, and then discuss the substitutions. This activity should prepare them to see why the similes in the de la Mare poem are fresh and original.

Suggested Questions:

1. If you were suddenly to shrink down to the size of a fly the whole world would seem different to you. Find at least six things in the poem that would be different.

2. Why do you think the poet used similes in this poem? Are all the similes the same?

3. What words rhyme in this poem? What is the meter? Have you ever seen this particular stanza pattern before?

4. What is a simile? Try to work out a definition of it.

5. What is the poet's basic idea? How does he develop it? Why did he stop? --(He stopped because he had made his point, but there is no reason he couldn't have gone on. A list of illustrations can continue indefinitely, limited only by the writer's ingenuity and the reader's boredom.)

Suggested Activities:

1. Can you write an additional stanza to follow what de la Mare has written? Try to get the same stanza pattern he uses. --(You might have to start them with something. Try an exercise in communal composition, starting with a line or two and coming up with something like this:

A thimble like a giant's cave,
A tooth pick like a log;
A BB like a basketball,
A mouse huge as a dog. --or "A puff of smoke, a smog.")

2. Suppose you woke up one morning and discovered you had turned into a fly (or a beetle, or ant). You knew that you would turn back into yourself in one hour, so you knew you had only a short time in which to have fly adventures. You're off!

1. What room would you fly into?

2. Where would you land?

3. What would you do there?

4. As you looked around, how would these objects look to you? The clock, your slippers, a straight pin, a bandaid, a mirror, a fly swatter.

5. Where else would you go in the house and what would you do there?

6. How could you get outside?

7. What would you do out there?

8. How would some of these things seem to you as you alighted on them? A doorhandle, a leaf, a spider web, the bark of a tree, a puddle, an anthill, a blade of grass, a pebble, a flower?

9. Would you rather stay a fly, or turn back into yourself? Why? Write up your ideas as a story and share your adventure with a friend. See if he has some other ideas.

3. Suppose one run-of-the-mill day, you suddenly changed into a skyscraper, 72 stories tall and you were standing in the middle of a big crowded-together city. What would these things look like to you?

1. A person walking by would look like a . . . .

2. A car going by would look like a . . . .

3. An umbrella, or a bunch of them would look like . . . ..

4. A jet would look like a.. . . . .

5. A piper cub would look like a . . . .

6. Your elevator going up and down would feel like . . . .

7. A one-story house would look like . . . .

8. Your windows being washed would feel like . . . .

9. A tree would look like . . . .

10. A fire hydrant would look like . . . .

11. Your walls being sandblasted would feel like . . . .

12. Snow falling on and around you would feel like . . . .

13. Clouds would look like . . . .

14. Water sprayed on you from a fire hose would feel like . . . .

15. Birds on your window sills would feel like . . . .

16. A street would look like . . . .

17. Your TV antennae would be like . . . .

18. A door slamming inside of you would feel like . . . .

Share your comparisons with a friend and listen to his as he reads them to you.

4. How many things can you compare your cat (TV set or family car) to? Make a list of the comparisons, and express the comparisons as similes. For example: Quiet as a phantom (cat), Eyes like two flashlights (cat), etc. Look over what you have written, and see if it sounds like a poem.

SIMILE

Purpose: To examine simile as only one contributing factor to the total effect of a poem.

Selection: "Giraffes," by Sy Kahn, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 31.

Analysis:

A more subdued use of simile distinguishes this poem from "The Fly." Here, the similes are contributing elements--not the exclusive feature--of a highly vivid description. You will want to ask your students what else contributes to the effect of the poem besides the similes they readily identify. "Stilted," for instance, not only refers to the animal's legs like stilts, but also characterizes its movements: unnatural, awkwardly pompous, "stilted" in other words. Will any of your students recognize this secondary meaning? So, too, with "airily." Not only do giraffes feed way up in the air, but their movements on their long, thin necks as they crop leaves are light and airy. The class should readily see the force of the phrase "finger painted," since they have all used this art form. This poem is a good place to review diction and imagery.

The similes are particularly apt. The peculiar knobs that distinguish the giraffe's head, coming atop his long neck, are much like "hammer headed flowers" on their long stem. So, too, with the "ears like leaves," high in the air. What about "Features fashioned as a joke"? Does the poet mean "like a joke" or "for a joke"? In one case you have a simile, in the other you don't. Ask them to discuss the question.

Most children will need an interpretation of the word "bizarre" in the last stanza. Here is a restatement of many of the things the poet has already described, and he ends the poem with another reference to the giraffe's height. He is so tall that his ears are tuned in to the quiet sliding of the clouds moving across the sky--a form of hidden metaphor.

Suggested Questions:

1. How many similes can you find in this poem?

2. You remember that poets choose words for their precision and descriptive force. What words do you find in this poem that are particularly effective? How do they work?

3. Look up the dictionary definition of the giraffe, or the one in the encyclopedia. How do they differ from Sy Kahn's "definition"?

4. How do you think the poet feels about giraffes? How do you know?

Suggested Activities:

1. Describe another animal at the zoo, such as a monkey, hippopotamus or a tiger (field trip opportunity). Describe him by using similes--for example, the tiger could be described like this: as silent as a glassy pond, striped like a jail window.

2. What do you think the giraffe feels like as he sees people looking at him, and hears people talking about him at the zoo? Pretend you are the giraffe and write down your thoughts. You might start like this--"I wish they'd stop laughing at me. It really hurts my feelings . . . ."

3. Write a story or poem about the giraffe with the collapsible neck. Would he usually keep himself collapsed or tall? (He might be in the Secret Service. Who knows?)

4. From magazine pictures and photographs, paste together a crazy animal who has perhaps, the head of a dinosaur, the feet of a duck, the tail of a rabbit, etc. What special abilities does your creation have? Write a story about him.

Reading Readiness:

1. Who has seen a giraffe? What do they look like?

2. Are they funny looking? What makes them funny looking?

Additional Poems:

1. "Forgive My Guilt," by Robert P. Tristram Coffin, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 76.

2. "Lost," by Carl Sandburg, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 69.

Reading Readiness:

"Forgive My Guilt"

1. Vocabulary: plover (the bird)

2. This is a poem about a man who remembers that he shot some birds when he was a boy. Do you think a man usually remembers the things he did when he was a boy? Would a man still feel badly about shooting birds years ago?

"Lost"

1. What does it feel like when a young child suddenly discovers that he is lost? What does he look for?

2. In this poem a boat is compared to a lost child. What might a boat lost in the fog be looking for?

Simile
Teacher

Literature V-VI

SIMILE

Purpose: To see how grouped similes in a poem produce a single strong visual effect.

Selection: "The Base Stealer," by Robert Francis, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 112.

Analysis:

Any eleven or twelve-year-old Little Leaguer knows the feelings engendered by an attempt to steal a base when his chances of making it are in the balance. Robert Francis vividly portrays the intense feelings of both the player on the field and the fan in the stands. His use of alliteration through the repetition of the letter "t" helps to portray these anxious moments more effectively. Not only do we find the "t" at the beginning of words as in the second and seventh lines, but it is repeated consistently throughout the poem in the middle and last syllables of words. You may want to point out these words in your discussion.

By now your children should readily recognize the simile and its purpose in a poem. Here all the similes generate a picture of unusually vivid activity: the base stealer is "taut like a tightrope walker," he bounces like a ball, he "hovers like an ecstatic bird." Such comparisons add to an already very exciting moment the elements of intensity and unity.

It would be of value to discuss who the speaker is in the poem. Certainly it has to be someone who himself has experienced a similar situation and can readily identify with the feelings and actions of the base stealer. But the tone of detached enjoyment seems to make the speaker a spectator--probably one who has played the game and knows it well.

Some children may need to become acquainted with the following words: poised, taut, taunts, ecstatic.

This poem might lend itself well to creative dramatics. Have various children act out the situations described as the poem is read by one of your students. Let the boys show off a bit; this is a boy's poem. Let them show the girls how base stealing is done.

Suggested Questions:

1. If you have ever been a "base stealer" you must have had some of the same feelings presented in this poem. Which lines seem especially meaningful to you?

2. Find instances where the poet has used the simile. Do you think the similes add to the effectiveness of the poem? How?

3. "Bouncing tiptoe" is compared to two different things. Why do you think the poet chose to make a double comparison?

4. What would be your position if your "fingertips were pointing the opposites"? Demonstrate the position as you would get ready to run.

5. Who do you think is speaking in this poem?

6. To whom is the line "He's only flirting, crowd him . . . " directed?

7. The poet uses alliteration in lines 7 and 8 by repeating the "t". Where else do you find a repetition of this letter? How does this contribute to a special feeling in the poem?

8. Why do you think Robert Francis repeated the word "delicate" in the last line?

Suggested Activity:

1. Have you ever felt pulled between two things? You wanted to do two things very badly, but had to choose one? Or you had to choose between two friends? Write about it.

Additional Poems:

1. "On Watching the Construction of a Skyscraper," by Burton Raffel, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 38.

2. "November Day," by Eleanor Averitt, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 121.

3. "Catalog," by Rosalie Moore, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 62.

Reading Readiness:

"On Watching the Construction of a Skyscraper"

1. (Construction steel is painted orange, not for its color, but because the chromite paint used for rust prevention turns out to be orange. It's rather interesting to consider a skyscraper skeleton as an orange tree.)

"November Day"

1. (People just don't pluck pheasants or chickens the way they used to. Supermarkets serve their chickens all neatly plucked and packaged. The children might enjoy knowing how plucking was accomplished so they can make the connection in the poem.

After the chicken was beheaded, it was dipped into a vat of scalding water. This loosened the feathers--and also produced a horrible odor. Then the chicken plucker held the chicken between her knees and plucked the feathers--first the big ones, then the little ones, and finally the pin feathers. All of the feathers, of course, fell to the ground in an interesting pile of colors.)

"Catalog"

1. (Put the list of cat questions on the chalkboard. Have the children answer each question in the most individual way they can.)

How do cats sleep?
walk?
awaken?
wait?
jump?
sing?
get through tight places?

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most successful ways of approaching and understanding poetry is to pay attention to the dramatic situation of a poem--what the circumstances are and who is speaking.

The speaker in a poem may be one of the characters created by the author, or it may sound like the author talking straight to you. It is only from the speaker's point of view that we are allowed to see the world that the author has created for us.

Imagine the author of a poem as a puppeteer. He creates any kind of puppets he wants to. The puppets can be very different from the puppeteer in appearance as well as point of view. For example, an old lady puppeteer could create a handsome prince puppet. On the other hand, a puppet can look like the puppeteer and also think like the puppeteer. But the puppeteer is always different from the puppet he dangles in front of his audience.

This concept is sometimes difficult for students to grasp but it is an important one if they are to understand stories or poems. Reading your students a poem in which the speaker is an animal will help them see that the speaker, an animal, must be different from the author, a human. Perhaps you could ask your students to write a short story in the first person ("I"), as though they were a witch, or a tiger, or a member of the opposite sex. Afterwards read some of the stories to the class and point out that the author, Billy, is not the speaker, a big fat whale, but that we readers see things from the whale's point of view because Billy the author wants us to. The whale is speaking to us.

Once your students have made this distinction, they will probably enjoy looking for and discussing different speakers and their points of view in stories and reading-text selections.

The poems in this unit illustrate different kinds of speaking voices. The first poem is an example of a speaker who is clearly different from the poet himself. The second selection is a dialogue between two characters. In the third poem there is no useful distinction between the author and the speaker. The range of speakers in this unit should help your students make the important distinction between author and speaker, and should also help them realize that it is important to consider the speaker when trying to understand a poem.

Speaker
Teacher

Literature V-VI

SPEAKER: DIFFERENT FROM AUTHOR

Purpose: To recognize the distinction between the speaker and author of a poem.

Selection: "What the Rattlesnake Said," by Vachel Lindsay (Poems to Enjoy, p. 171).

Analysis:

Because the speaker in this poem is a rattlesnake, as the title indicates, it is easy to distinguish between speaker and author. Your students should have no trouble seeing this difference. The speaker's and the author's points of view also differ, as a discussion of the poem will bring out.

The poem's effect lies in the contrast between the speaker's view of himself and our (also the author's) view of him. The snake speaks in the first person about himself, the all-important subject. He sees everything in terms of himself and as subservient to himself. The moon is afraid of him; the sun is afraid of him. Both celestial bodies spend the major part of their time quaking in fear of him, according to the rattlesnake. He sees the moon as a little prairie-dog. A real prairie-dog would be afraid of a rattlesnake. What we question, however, is the similarity between the moon and a prairie-dog. The snake claims that the moon "shivers through the night" and "cries" in fear of him. We as readers scratch our heads when we think about this metaphor. To us the moon rarely, if ever, seems to shiver, and it very seldom cries. We realize that the snake is distorting the world around him in order to see himself as a tyrant. As if the moon is not enough, the rattlesnake next subjugates the sun, not just during the day, but "morning, noon [the zenith of the sun's power], and night."

As the speaker's exaggeration increases, our belief in his point of view decreases. At the end of the poem we smile at the small creature and his foolish and self-deceiving pride. Your students will easily pick this up, especially if you read the poem out loud, emphasizing the "I's" as the italicized type indicates.

"The Frog and the Ox" (Arbuthnot Anthology of Children's Literature) is a story of a small animal with a large amount of pride. You might want to read it to your students as an example of a similar character, but one who goes on to suffer the consequences of his pride. The story of Jacob and his brothers in the Bible is still another example.

Suggested Questions:

1. Who is the speaker? Who is the author? What is the relationship between the point of view of speaker and author?

2. How does the snake see the moon? the sun? Do his images of the moon and the sun make sense to you? Why do you think he sees the moon and sun this way?

3. How do you feel about the rattlesnake? Do you know of other characters in other stories who are similar to the rattlesnake? If so, tell about them.

Suggested Activities:

1. Tell or write about a further episode in the life of the rattlesnake. How will he act among his friends? How will they react to him? Will his pride ever cause him to get in trouble? If so, how?

2. Given the personality of the rattlesnake as described in the poem, how would the snake view some of the following: the stars, a wind-storm, the rain, a jeep rattling across the desert, a movie company filming scenes in the desert, night?

3. Write a story or poem as though you are some kind of animal talking to your audience in the first person ("I.....").

Additional Poems:

1. "The Bat," by Ruth Herschberger (Pickle, p. 30).

2. "The Builders," by Sara Henderson Hay (Pickle, p. 37).

3. "The Child's Morning," by Winfield Townley Scott (Pickle, p. 99).

Reading Readiness:

"The Child's Morning"

1. Vocabulary: cuttlebone, watercress, aggies, immaculate

2. What are some of the things you like to do now, that you'll probably stop doing when you are older?

3. Can you name five sights or sounds that are a part of your life? (List these on the board; you should have an impressive list.)

SPEAKER: DIALOG

Purpose: To recognize that there can be more than one speaker in a single selection.

Selection: "On a Night of Snow," by Elizabeth Coatsworth (Pickle, p. 91).

Analysis: Vocabulary: marguerite (a pearl), spherical (round), intoning (chanting), hoar (white with frost), portent (a sign or omen).

The poem provides a particularly clear example of the concept treated in this lesson. In the first part there is no useful distinction to be made between author and speaker. In the second, the author has created a definite character, a cat who has good if mysterious reasons for wanting to go outside. Clearly, Elizabeth Coatsworth is not a cat, but like any good dramatist she is able to create character, and make the imaginative leap into that character's mind and point of view. Our understanding of the poem depends on our recognition of the speaking voice--here, two voices, developing opposing point of view.

You might want to discuss the contrasting world described in the first and second stanzas: the everyday vs. the unusual and magical, warmth and quiet vs. the cold and the strange eerie noises, familiarity and comfort vs. dark, little happening vs. a lot happening.

You also might want to compare the points of view expressed in this poem with those in "Lone Dog" (see Rhyme). Both the cat and the lone dog express a desire for adventure and the accompanying hardships. Both poems treat the opposing point of view--the desire for comfort and security--but the treatment of these ideas differs.

This poem presents a good opportunity for some review if you have dealt with rhyme scheme, metaphor, simile, or imagery. The rhyme scheme varies between the two parts of the poem. Metaphor in line 3 and simile in line 6 could be noted, as well as the imagery used to describe the milk, the flames, the meadow grasses.

Suggested Questions:

1. Introductory discussion: Do any of you have pets at home? Do you ever talk to your pets? How many of you have cats? Can you get your cat to do what you want it to do?

If you were sitting at home in front of a comfortable fireplace on a cold and snowy night, how would you feel if your cat meowed to go outside?

Would you let her go?

What mysterious things would make a cat want to go outside on a night like that?

2. Who is speaking in the first part of the poem? Who is she speaking to and for what reason?

3. What feelings does the speaker have about her cat?

4. Why does the speaker not want her cat to go outside?

5. What imagery or word pictures does the mistress use to convince the cat it should stay in?

6. Who is speaking in the second part of the poem? To whom?

7. What is the cat's point of view about going outside?

8. How does this point of view differ from that of its mistress?

9. Which point of view do you agree with and why?

10. Can you find any examples of metaphor or simile in the poem?

Suggested Activities:

1. Write about a familiar situation from two different points of view, either in poetic or prose form (yours and your parents', pet's, teacher's, friend's).

2. What do you think the cat does once he is outside? Remember, "wild winds" are blowing, "strange voices" are chanting, and "more than cats move" outside. "Magic and might" are probably at work. Write a story or poem about the cat's strange adventures.

Additional Poems:

1. "Father William," by Lewis Carroll (Poems to Enjoy, p. 137).

2. "Overheard in a Saltmarsh," by Harold Monro (Pickle, p. 65).

3. "Lord Randall," anonymous (text below).

Reading Readiness:

"Father William"

1. Vocabulary: incessantly, shilling, suet

2. What would you think of an old man who stood on his head? How about if he turned a back-somersault?

"Overheard in a Saltmarsh"

1. Vocabulary: saltmarsh, nymph, goblin, lagoon

2. What do you think you might overhear in a saltmarsh?

3. Have you ever heard a nymph talking to a goblin? Why not? Do you think you'll ever hear them talk?

LORD RANDALL

"Where have you been all the day, Randall,
my son?
Where have you been all the day, my pretty
one?"
"I've been to my sweetheart's, mother;
I've been to my sweetheart's, mother;
Please make my bed soon,
For I'm sick to the heart and I fain[1] would
lie down."

"What have you been eating there, Randall,
my son?
What have you been eating there, my pretty
one?"
"Eels and eels' broth, mother;
Eels and eels' broth, mother;
Now make my bed soon,
For I'm sick to the heart and I fain would
lie down."

"What was the color of their skins, Randall,
my son?
What was the color of their skins, my
pretty one?"
"Spickle[2] and sparkle, mother;
Spickle and sparkle, mother;
Now make my bed soon,
For I'm sick to the heart and I fain would
lie down."

[1]fain: gladly [2]spickle: probably means "speckled"

"Where did she get them from, Randall, my
son?
Where did she get them from, my pretty one?"
"From hedges and ditches, mother;
From hedges and ditches, mother;
Now make my bed soon,
For I'm sick to the heart and I fain would
lie down."

"What will you leave your family, Randall,
my son?
What will you leave your family, my pretty
one?"
"My gold and my silver, mother;
My gold and my silver, mother;
Please make my bed soon,
For I'm sick to the heart and I fain would
lie down."

"What will you leave your sweetheart,
Randall, my son?
What will you leave your sweetheart, my
pretty one?"
"A rope to hang her, mother;
A rope to hang her, mother;
Now make my b d soon,
For I'm sick to the heart and I fain would
lie down."

SPEAKER: SAME AS AUTHOR

Purpose: To recognize that the distinction between speaker and author is not always a useful one.

Selection: "The Stump," by Donald Hall (Pickle, p. 135).

Analysis: Vocabulary: lamentation, guttural.

In your discussion of this poem, you will want to ask not only "Who is speaking?" but also "What is his attitude toward the event?" The author has created a speaking voice which expresses a very complex attitude toward the cutting down of the tree.

In the first two stanzas we are led to share with the speaker the feeling of sadness about the central incident when "they cut down the oak." His recollection about the tree in summer, with its sails of branches, the acorns, and the "cities of squirrels" that lived in it, is juxtaposed with the present dead tree in winter. The tone is one of nostalgia and regret.

In the final stanza, however, the speaker states that he enjoyed seeing the tree come down, and that he "loved the guttural saw." The tone is one of musing wonderment, for he states that this enjoyment was "strange" to him. He is aware of the duality of his emotions, but doesn't understand them. This combination of sadness and enjoyment is a common experience, even to younger children. Many of them will have had the same sort of feeling about, say, the end of summer and the beginning of school.

The purpose of the poem is to capture this universally experienced feeling by relating it to a specific incident--what has been called the "concrete universal." Only by paying close attention to what the speaker in the poem says can we understand the poem.

Suggested Questions:

1. Introductory Discussion: Suppose someone came and cut down a large tree that you had become used to seeing. How would you feel about it?

Would you stay and watch the men cutting down the tree? Why would you watch?

2. What has happened in this poem?

3. Who is speaking?

4. In the first two stanzas how does the speaker feel about what has happened? How do you know? What imagery has the author used to help you picture the scene?

5. In the last stanza how do his feelings change? Why does he feel this way?

6. What does the oak tree represent to the speaker in the last stanza?

7. Have you ever experienced having happy and sad feelinga about something? What does the phrase "mixed feelings" mean?

Suggested Activities:

1. Think back to a time when you had mixed feelings about something: a birthday party, being in a play, the first day of school, Christmas day. Write about that time, showing your audience how you felt one way, and then another.

2. Old objects continually get replaced by new, modern ones--old cars by new ones, old buildings by new ones, old bridges by new ones, etc. Write about something old in your neighborhood or city being replaced by something new.

Additional Poems:

1. "The Centaur," by May Swenson (Poems to Enjoy, pp. 54-7).

2. "Loneliness," by Brooks Jenkins (Pickle, p. 55).

3. "August from My Desk," by Roland Flint (Pickle, p. 49).

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Metaphor II: Extended Metaphor and Review

Literature V-VI

Teacher

INTRODUCTION

To keep these lessons a manageable size, we have broken up the topic of metaphor into two chapters. For a general discussion of metaphor, its relation to simile, and the object and means of figures of comparison, see the earlier chapter, "Metaphor I."

This chapter continues the study of metaphor, dealing specifically with one of the most common forms, the extended metaphor. As the term implies, the extended metaphor is simply the elaboration of the means of comparison in the metaphoric statement, frequently including the entire poem. In many cases, the object of the metaphor is stated only in the title.

The second part of the chapter is designed primarily for review. We present a series of poems with a large proportion of metaphor and simile, structured in different ways, some quite simple, some more complex. Since an excess of technical terminology can confuse your students and distract them from appreciating the function of figurative language, we have not bothered to invent names for all the varieties of figures illustrated. It would be a useless exercise in classification. The main object is to have them recognize the figures, and appreciate the added dimensions of vividness and variety and intensity such devices give to a poem.

Metaphor II
Teacher

Literature V-VI

EXTENDED METAPHOR

Purpose: To show how a single comparison unifies and gives meaning to an entire poem.

Selection: "Steam Shovel," by Charles Malam, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 37.

Analysis:

There is nothing particularly challenging about the metaphor Charles Malam develops in his whimsical poem, "Steam Shovel." Children who have been introduced to the simple metaphor and understand its effect in poetry will quickly appreciate the visual appropriateness of the comparison; some, perhaps remembering earlier discussions of overused metaphors, may even feel that the steam shovel-dinosaur equation verges on triteness.

If the poem is saved from that accusation, it is because of the details Malam uses to extend his metaphor. The important thing for your students to see is that the initial comparison governs the entire poem--is, in fact, its whole point or "reason to be." Have them list and discuss the various means (dinosaur-like qualities) by which the object (the steam shovel) is defined: it has a "iron head," "dripping jaws," "long neck," etc. The better students are likely to see, before you point out the fact, that this is a personified metaphor--that is, to the poet, this steam shovel dinosaur has some human characteristics. Ask them to point these out, focusing particularly on the last four lines.

With a good class, you might raise the question of why the poet doesn't just state his point that "steam shovels look like dinosaurs," and let it go at that. What is gained by extending the comparison down to various small details? In other words, what justifies the existence of the poem at all? Naturally, it is hard to judge where such a discussion would go, but you could expect it to elicit some elementary understanding about the meaning of aesthetic pleasure, the "purposes" of literature, and so on. Don't press them on this, but see what they have to say.

Suggested Questions:

1. What is the poet comparing the steam shovel to? Do you need the poem's title to know what he is talking about? Why or why not?

2. What are the different details the poet uses to extend his comparison?

3. What other dinosaur-like features of the steam shovel might the poet have included? --(Massive body, slow and lumbering movement, etc.)

4. Have steam shovels ever looked like any other kind of animal to you? If so, give your reasons for seeing such a comparison.

5. What is the poet's attitude toward this particular "creature"? How do you know?

Suggested Activities:

1. Bring to class some pictures of steam shovels and other heavy machinery. Discuss what kinds of animals the machines remind you of.

2. Draw a detailed picture of the steam shovel dinosaur described in this poem.

3. Do different people remind you of different animals? In what ways? Body build? Facial features? Actions? Why do we make comparisons of this type?

4. Pick out an object of part of a landscape that reminds you of something else and state the comparison as a metaphor: "_____ is _____." Then write a paragraph in which you list as many detailed points of comparison between the two items as you can. Here are some comparisons to start you thinking:

object	means
automobile	panther or cat
clouds	blankets or boats
wooded hills	a wooly scalp
raindrops	pearls or diamonds
hose	snake
furnace	dragon

(Note to teacher: The emphasis in the above comparisons is, like that of the poem, on mere visual similarity. But if your students have shown facility for thinking in figurative terms, you might suggest some more complex non-visual comparisons for them to develop:

time as a river
time as a nibbling termite or mouse
life as a cup to be drained
life as a butterfly
a book as a ship, taking the reader to a new world

Of course, you can come up with many more. If you choose this latter activity, the third poem listed below should be a particularly helpful beginning. The first two additional poems depend mainly on visual similarity.)

Reading Readiness:

"Steam Shovel"

1. (Refer children to "The Flintstones.")
2. What type of work does Fred Flintstone do?
3. What animal does Fred use?
4. Why do you think the artists chose that animal?

Additional Poems:

1. "The Toaster," by William Jay Smith, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 37.

2. "The Garden Hose," by Beatrice Janosco, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 110.

3. "A Coney Island Life," by James L. Weil, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 74.

Reading Readiness:

"The Coney Island Life"

1. (Do your children know what Coney Island is? You might picture it as a permanent carnival--if your children know what a carnival is.)
2. (Can you get across to your children that a carnival is loud, dazzling, fast-moving--and unreal?)
3. Vocabulary: helium, carousel, brass ring

EXTENDED METAPHOR

Purpose: To analyze a poem in which the extended metaphor involves comparing an idea with an object, rather than two objects with each other.

Selection: "Hope Is the Thing with Feathers," by Emily Dickinson (text below).

HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without words,
And never stop at all.

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

--Emily Dickinson

Analysis:

Vocabulary: soul -(throw this open to class discussion; no one definition can be "right")
sore - severe, violent
abash - to shock or silence
extremity - a time of great trouble or "extreme" circumstances

Emily Dickinson's poem represents an advance over "Steam Shovel" in that the metaphor it develops is more complex, involving correspondence between an object and an idea rather than mere visual correspondence between two objects. Your students should readily grasp the connection between the object (hope) and the means (a bird), and be able to point to places in the poem where bird-like qualities of hope are enumerated. But the precise relationship of means-to-object may need some explanation, since the emotional experience described in the poem may not yet have touched children of this age.

Before reading the poem, have the children discuss what they mean when they talk about hope. The discussion will (hopefully!) establish a distinction they will probably need if they are to read the poem rightly--the distinction between simple anticipation and what we might call endurance.

For children, hope is usually a short-term feeling--they "hope" it won't rain for the picnic tomorrow; they "hope" Santa will bring them what they want for Christmas. This concept of hope is not absent in the present poem (for, of course, anticipation is a kind of internal "singing"), but the poem deals more properly with what we might call long-term hope or endurdurance--a state of mind someone might have to keep through many disappointments or moments of anxiety.

It is a good idea to try to make students see this distinction before they tackle the poem. Have them think of situations in which a "long-term" attitude would be required, and discuss how the accompanying feelings of hope would be different from those raised by a planned picnic or an expected Christmas gift. Here are some possible situations they might encounter:

1. Hoping a brother or father will come home safely from war.

2. Hoping a very sick relative, friend, or beloved pet will recover.

3. Hoping to be accepted by other children when moving into a new neighborhood.

Having worked toward establishing this distinction, you can turn their attention to the poem itself. First let them point out how the hope-bird comparison is extended throughout the poem. Then see if they can paraphrase the point the comparison makes about the nature of hope. The first two stanzas are explicit and general enough: they say that hope is a feeling we have, but like other emotions, it is impossible to locate specifically in our bodies (hence

it perches in the incorporeal "soul"). We can't talk about how hope feels--it sings in us "without words"--but it is the one comforting, constant, "warm" feeling we can retain through times of great trouble or stress. Only the most terrible tragedies (the "sorest storms") can completely silence the singing of hope in our souls.

The poet reveals her personal experience with hope in the final stanza, and her point here may be more difficult to get across to your students. When she says that the bird of hope never asks a "crumb" of her, she may mean that, unlike other emotions such as anger, or envy, or sorrow, which she (and we) must act to change, hope merely requires the ability to wait and see how things turn out. Miss Dickinson seems to feel that hope involves needing to be serene and patient (rather than a beggar for "crumbs"), and hers is perhaps a good explanation of why hope is more persistent than most other human emotions.

Suggested Questions:

1. Have you ever whistled or hummed to yourself when you were really looking forward to some event or some special day? Have you heard other people do this?

2. What connection might such singing or humming have with the comparison made in this poem? Go through the poem and pick out the places where the object of the comparison is extended by the means.

3. Do you think this comparison is an appropriate one? Why or why not?

4. Can there be different "kinds" of hope? If you think so, describe them.

5. There is a famous saying that "hope springs eternal in the human breast." What do you think this means? Does it have anything to do with this poem?

Suggested Activities:

1. Pretend you have a close friend or relative who is in the hospital and very ill, and you don't know if he is going to get well. Write a story about your hopes as you are waiting to find out what will happen to him.

2. Collect as many poems about hope as you can find. Which ones make a comparison between hope and something else? That is, what kinds of metaphors for hope are contained in the poems? Are any of them extended metaphors?

Additional Poems:

1. "Apartment House," by Gerald Raftery, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 39.

2. "Unfolding Bud," by Naoshi Koriyama, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 17.

3. "Legacy," by Christopher Morley, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 130.

4. "Little Elegy," by X. J. Kennedy, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 119.

Reading Readiness:

"Apartment House"

1. How are bees and humans alike?

"Unfolding Bud"

1. (Do you have access to any time-exposure movies of flowers opening? Check the science films.)

2. When you look at a flower you see it only as it appears at that moment. It could be closed up, partly open, or all the way open. If you wanted to see a flower at all stages of its beauty, what would you have to do?

"Legacy"

1. Vocabulary: legacy, will (last ____ and testament), torrent

2. Usually we think of a will in terms of money. But there are other things that can be passed from one person to another: appearance, personality, education, love of life. What are some others?

3. Supposing you were willed a dogwood tree, a fast stream, a pond, and mountains. What would you do with them?

"Little Elegy"

1. Vocabulary: elegy, quicksilver

2. (Death is not an easy concept to discuss for many children--and adults, for that matter. You know your students well enough to to know how far to go.)

3. Many words are used by people instead of "dead"; some of these words are: asleep, passed on, gone to another world. Why do you think people use these words instead of referring directly to death?

Metaphor II
Teacher

Literature V-VI

EXTENDED METAPHOR: SUMMARY

Purpose: To demonstrate how, in a group of poems, a single object may be developed by different means.

Selections: "The Waning Moon," by Percy Bysshe Shelley (text below).

"The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky," by Vachel Lindsay (text below).

"who knows if the moon's," by E. E. Cummings, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 170.

THE WANING MOON

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy
veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading
brain,
The moon arose up in the murky East,
A white and shapeless mass--

--Percy Bysshe Shelley

THE MOON'S THE NORTH WIND'S COOKY[1]

The Moon's the North Wind's cooky,
He bites it, day by day,
Until there's but a rim of scraps
That crumble all away.

The South Wind is a baker.
He kneads clouds in his den
And bakes a crisp new moon that...greedy
North...Wind...eats...again!

--Vachel Lindsay

[1]"The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky" from COLLECTED POEMS by Vachel Lindsay. Copyright 1914 by The Macmillan Company, renewed 1942 by Elizabeth C. Lindsay.

Analysis:

All three of these poems have in common the use of the moon as the object in one side of an extended comparison. In all three the object is stated in the first line and different means are used to extend it through the poem.

The class will probably see at once that the Shelley poem is an extended simile rather than a metaphor, but they should also recognize that his poem uses the same techniques to develop its comparison as do the Lindsay and Cummings poems, which are straightforward examples of extended metaphor.

Ask your students to discuss the three poems comparatively, perhaps beginning with the Lindsay poem, since they encountered it in the previous unit. Among the many questions you can consider are these: To what degree does each poem develop its comparison? How do the metaphors differ? What various qualities of the moon are brought home to us by seeing it as a cooky, a feeble old lady, or a balloon? Conversely, are there comparisons saying some of the same things in different ways? In which poems does personification play a significant role? What influence, if any, do rhyme and stanza pattern have on the way the poems make their points?

A comparative discussion of these poems should be an excellent way to reinforce the children's understanding of many of the concepts introduced earlier. And, of course, it should demonstrate how much power figurative language has to enrich our experience of individual objects. Since this should be a freewheeling discussion, we offer no specific suggestions for discussion beyond those suggested above. Merely give them the three poems and let the discussion range.

Metaphor II
Teacher

Literature V-VI

REVIEW

Purpose: In this section we offer a further selection of poems illustrating the various uses of metaphor and simile. Rather than giving a detailed analysis of each poem, we will suggest the most salient points for discussion, and indicate for each poem those comparisons which might most reward discussion.

Selections:

1. "The Pheasant," by R. P. Tristram Coffin, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 120.

2. "Southbound on the Freeway," by May Swenson, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 82.

3. "The Big Nasturtiums," by Robert Beverly Hale, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 52.

Analysis:

1. "The Pheasant"

Note the use of metaphor as a controlling device in giving unity to this poem. We move from life to death, itself the most complete cycle of all. Supplementing this is the movement of the metaphoric sequence: from jewel (living) to hymn to thunder to jewel (dead). The poem completes the life-death cycle by repeating the metaphor. The brilliant plumage of the cock pheasant remains jewel-like--only life is gone.

The third couplet is worth consideration. What kind of hymn is it that is neither meek nor tender? What answers will you get? Ask them to discuss a hymn characterized by "scorn" and "fierceness."

For the advanced class, you might want to discuss the function of poetry as a vehicle for presenting unanswerable questions. As a supplement to the Coffin poem, ask them to discuss the following:

TO A WILD DUCK

As strong as the rush of your silver wing
So swift and sure is the death I bring.

And life is a puzzle, for me to be knowing
This beauty with you--and your red blood flowing.

2. "Southbound on the Freeway"

We mentioned in the introduction to "Metaphor I" the idea of submerged metaphor. Should you wish to introduce another term to your class, this poem is a good illustration of the type. Remember that a submerged metaphor is one in which either object or means is implied, instead of stated.

"Southbound on the Freeway" takes advantage of an assumed alien point of view, using a series of submerged metaphors to make a statement about one of our world's most representative processes, driving. Have the class identify the implied objects of the various metaphors:

creatures of metal and glass--cars
feet--wheels
diagrams, measuring tapes--roads
eyes--head and tail lights
five-eyed creature--police car

The significant metaphor here is, of course, the notion of men as the "guts" of these creatures. In the third stanza, the image merely corresponds to the visual perceptions made by the alien. But the last two stanzas hint at a point of view that we as well as the alien are to consider: What is the meaning of "guts"? Can the word have more than one meaning? What does it mean when placed in contrast with "brains"? (Visceral or emotional response versus reason.) Which quality is more important to have while driving--or ought one to have both?

Looking at this process, the alien is unable to tell which of the two qualities governs it. What does this reveal about the poet's attitude toward driving?

3. "The Big Nasturtiums"

In "The Big Nasturtiums," Robert Beverly Hale employs an extended metaphor in which the actual object is submerged. Once we grasp the reality the big flowers represent, the reason for submerging the object becomes clear. This poem is powerful precisely because it "sneaks" gradually into our minds an idea which we necessarily try to surpress when it is presented directly.

The impact of the poem will be greater if you can get your students to identify by themselves what the flowers represent. You could start by defining what a nasturtium looks like, and perhaps show the class some pictures of the flower. Then have them read the poem, asking them to analyze what happens when these big flowers arrive upon the scene. That they are destructive is clear--they cover our churches and memorial statues, and somehow cause our trains to be late and our planes to fall from the sky. Direct the class's attention to details emphasizing the redness or orangeness of the flowers--they turn the sand dunes "tiger red" and make the whole world seem to be "on fire."

Once your students see the essential metaphor, you can deal with the moral implications of the story the poem tells. The poet clearly feels little faith in the power of our political and religious institutions (represented by the statue of Lincoln and the church spire) to prevent the arrival of nuclear holocaust. But the accusation he makes against individuals is perhaps greatest of all. Grandpa never expected the big flowers to arrive in his lifetime; his main concern was apparently for his own well-being. He seems to have been indifferent to the fate of future generations, represented in the poem by his grandson. But because he didn't do more to prevent the big nasturtiums from coming, they caught up with him too.

Ask the students why the poet thought it appropriate to use a natural, growing thing--a flower--as the metaphor for a thing of destruction. (Remind them that another image we often use to describe nuclear explosions is also a natural thing, a mushroom.) Try to get them to see that the poet uses natural images because he wants to say it is man's misuse of nature that causes this destruction. If man were in harmony with himself and nature (the forces of the atom are, after all, part of "nature" too), the red flowers would represent life and not death.

Additional Poems:

No detailed machinery is provided for the following selections, but they should give you ample opportunity to explore further the concepts presented in Metaphor I and Metaphor II.

1. "Buffalo Dusk," by Carl Sandburg, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 11.

Emphasize the multiple meaning of "pageant of dusk."

2. "Swallows," by Thomas Hornsby Ferril, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Poems, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 27.

Emphasize the metaphor "a treadmill of swallows."

3. "There is a Jewel," by John Wilbye (text below).

Vocabulary: chimic--chemical
homely--ordinary, everyday
strain--piece of musical melody
naught--nothing

Emphasize metaphors of content as a "jewel" and a "miracle-worker."

4. "The Angle of a Landscape," by Emily Dickinson (text below).

Vocabulary: ample--large or generous
Venetian--person from Venice, connoting patience and watchfulness
accosts--assaults or comes suddenly into view
casket--small box (not funereal)

Here you have simile ("Like a Venetian"); personification ("forehead of a hill," "vane's forefinger," "steeple's finger"); submerged metaphor (leaves--"emeralds," icicles or snowflakes--"diamonds," snow clouds--"polar caskets").

THERE IS A JEWEL

There is a jewel which no Indian mines
Can buy, no chimic art can counterfeit.
It makes men rich in greatest poverty;
Makes water wine; turns wooden cups to gold,
The homely whistle to sweet music's strain.
Seldom it comes, to few from Heaven sent,
That much in little, all in naught, Content.

--John Wilbye

THE ANGLE OF A LANDSCAPE

The angle of a landscape
That every time I wake
Between my curtain and the wall
Upon an ample crack

Like a Venetian, waiting,
Accosts my open eye,
Is just a bough of apples
Held slanting in the sky,

The pattern of a chimney,
The forehead of a hill,
Sometimes a vane's forefinger--
But that's occasional.

The seasons shift my picture.
Upon my emerald bough
I wake to find no emeralds;
Then diamonds which the snow

From polar caskets fetched me.
The chimney and the hill
And just the steeple's finger,
These never stir at all.

--Emily Dickinson

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INTRODUCTION

Like the simile, metaphor is a trope based primarily on comparison. It has, however, a far greater potential for intensity, compression, and variety than the simile, and thus it is not surprising to find it used more frequently in poetry. From Aristotle to the present, the effective use of metaphor and the quality of the poet's "metaphoric perception" have been a major measuring stick of good poetry and of poetic power.

Metaphor, as we have said, is a comparison, and as such shares with similes the quality of being a non-literal use of language. Its basic difference from the simile is that the simile is a stated analogy, while the metaphor is an implied or stated identity. A simple distinction, but highly significant. When Burns said, "O my love's like a red, red rose," he was using simile. Had he said, "My love is a red, red rose," he would have been using metaphor. In simile, the two things compared are kept separate; in metaphor they are brought much closer--indeed, they are identical. "This is like that," says simile. "This is that," says metaphor. Literally, of course, it's not true: love is not at all a red, red rose. It is this deliberate and illogical misuse of an equation that irritates literalists and scientists and which is at the heart of poetry.

In teaching and discussing comparisons such as metaphor and simile, it is most useful to distinguish between the two sides of the comparison. In this way, the relationship between the two parts of the figure can be more easily observed. The standard terminology for the two sides of a comparative figure is tenor (that which is being described), and vehicle (that which is used for the description). Thus, in the metaphor above, the tenor is "my love" and the vehicle is "a red, red rose."

But such terminology is very confusing, especially to younger students, who will never remember which is which and so are liable to drop the whole confusing mess. We suggest that in dealing with metaphor you use terminology that is more immediately meaningful to your students. You could get them to distinguish between what is being described and how it is being described, for example, or you could express it in terms of the object of description and the means of description. Anything that will help them verbalize their perception of the two sides of the trope. In the following discussion and lessons we will use the latter terms.

In metaphor, then, object and means are in a much closer relationship than in simile. A moment's reflection will show the greater flexibility of metaphor. When Dylan Thomas, for instance, evoking the memories of his childhood in a seacoast town in Wales, speaks of the "heron priested shore," he is doing things with language that only metaphor will allow. This is a simple but strikingly rich figure. Notice its extreme complexity and compression. Metaphor is piled on metaphor. "Heron-priested" is itself a metaphor, with the object (heron) a noun, described by the means (priested), itself a noun transformed into the past participle of a verb. This phrase is used as an adjective modifying "shore," which is

the object of a metaphor with an implied means (shore as altar or place of worship). The result is a much more striking and compressed figure than, say, "The herons on their long legs along the bay shore were like priests officiating in some holy place."

You will not want to get into anything as complex as that with your class, but you will want to begin the process of awakening their awareness of the use to which poets (and people) put the possibilities of language, and the inescapable metaphorical quality of communication.

You should have little trouble getting your class to see the basic distinction between simile and metaphor. Once they get the idea, they should enjoy finding metaphors, and seeing how they are used for vividness and concreteness. They should enjoy composing metaphors of their own. The lessons that follow will deal with some of the most common forms of metaphoric expression. We list below some of the terminology you may want to introduce.

Dead Metaphor. Your class could have fun compiling and adding to a collection of dead metaphors, words from which the original metaphoric quality has disappeared and which have become part of the literal language. The "leg" of a table, the "arm" of a chair, the "foot" of a hill, the "eye" of a needle, the "mouth" of a river, the "head" of a stream are all examples of dead metaphor.

More interesting, and an exercise that should stimulate your brighter students, is the search for the metaphors hidden in the etymology of words. "Daisy," for instance, a flower that closes at night and opens in the morning, was originally "day's eye," a lovely metaphor. Or "curfew," which originally meant "to cover the fire," an act of some significance when the fire was the only source of illumination. See what they can come up with.

Personification. A metaphor in which the object is non-human and the means a human characteristic or description. The attribution of human (or animal) characteristics to inanimate objects. "The cry of the wind," for example or "the smiling sun" (almost dead metaphors, by the way). Personification is a rich poetic resource, but when overused becomes ridiculous. Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" is the classic example of personification pushed to the point of absurdity.

Simple Metaphor. A direct statement of the equation between object and means: "Life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly." Or a metaphor in which object and means are clear and obviously related: "The ivy's blunt webbed fingers."

Extended Metaphor. An elaborate development of the means, which frequently includes the entire poem or a large part of it. With extended metaphor, the object is often implied rather than stated, or may be merely mentioned in the title.

Submerged Metaphor. A metaphor, extended or not, in which the object is implied rather than explicit. "Which of you rats swiped my candy bar?" The object (fellow students) is implied by the means (rats), but is never stated.

Metaphor I
Teacher

Literature V-VI

SIMPLE METAPHOR

Purpose: To illustrate the difference between simile (analogy) and metaphor (identity).

Selection: "Dreams," by Langston Hughes, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 129.

Analysis:

Very little need be said about this brief poem of Langston Hughes'. Two simple stanzas, parallel in grammatical and rhetorical structure, each built around a simple metaphor. The equation is directly stated.

Your students should have no trouble in discussing the difference between the metaphors here and the similes they studied earlier. Have them practice changing these into similes, so that they can see the difference. Make sure they realize that metaphor is a statement of identity, while simile is a statement of analogy. Here is as simple a place as any to introduce the idea of the two parts of a comparison (object and means). Let them try to use other metaphors: life (object) is a flower that cannot bloom (means), life (object) is a night without a dawn (means), and so forth. Discuss with them the merit of the figures used in the poem. The idea of soaring hope that dreams bring implied in the bird metaphor, and the idea of a field unable to grow and blossom in the second figure, are particularly appropriate to the point of the poem.

Suggested Questions:

1. What comparisons can you find in this poem? What is being compared to what?

2. Do you remember what a simile is? How do you define a simile? How do the comparisons here differ?

3. There is a name we give to this kind of comparison. --(Discuss metaphor, and try to get them to give you a definition in their own words. Introduce the idea of object and means and discuss.)

4. Do you think the metaphors in this poem are appropriate to the poem? What if the poet had said, "Life is a crushed worm that cannot crawl"? --(This sort of question can be related to their discussion of connotation in an earlier lesson. The suitability of the image to the idea of the poem is a connotative consideration.)

Suggested Activities:

1. Compose some further metaphors for Langston Hughes' poem. Life is _____. List several suggestions and discuss their suitability.

2. Make a list of metaphorical expressions you use in everyday speech, or that you come across in your reading.

3. Discuss the idea of "dead metaphors." Compile a running list of dead metaphors and add to it.

4. With the help of your teacher, go to the dictionary for metaphors hidden in the etymology of common words. --(See introduction to this chapter. You may wish to find some words yourself to start them off with, like "breakfast," "brontosaurus," "broom," "cormorant" and on through to "yacht" and "zodiac."

Reading Readiness:

"Dreams"

1. What does LIFE mean? Could it mean more than being born and remaining alive until death?

2. How about DREAMS? Can dreams mean something more than what we do when we're asleep?

3. What did Martin Luther King mean when he said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character"?

Additional Poems:

1. "What the Rattlesnake Said," by Vachel Lindsay, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 171.

2. "The Toaster," by William Jay Smith, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 37.

Reading Readiness:

"What the Rattlesnake Said"

1. Are you afraid of rattlesnakes? Why?

2. Do you think other animals fear the rattlesnake too?

3. If a rattlesnake could think and talk like a human, what do you think he'd say about everyone being afraid of him?

"The Toaster"

1. What animal could you use to compare your toaster with? Why would you use that animal?

Metaphor I
Teacher

Literature V-VI

PERSONIFICATION

Purpose: To demonstrate the special qualities of personification, which is one type of metaphor.

Selection: "The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky," by Vachel Lindsay (text below).

THE MOON'S THE NORTH WIND'S COOKY[1]

The Moon's the North Wind's cooky,
He bites it, day by day,
Until there's but a rim of scraps
That crumble all away.

The South Wind is a baker.
He kneads clouds in his den
And bakes a crisp new moon that...
greedy
North...Wind...eats...again!

--Vachel Lindsay

---

[1]"The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky" from COLLECTED POEMS by Vachel Lindsay. Copyright 1914 by The Macmillan Company, renewed 1942 by Elizabeth C. Lindsay.

Analysis:

There are several metaphors in this poem, and so it should serve as an advance over the very simple metaphoric structure of the Langston Hughes poem. Two of the metaphors are personifications, and two are not, providing an illustration through comparison and contrast of the main point of the lesson. If your class is familiar with the terminology, you might ask them to list all the metaphors in terms of object and means:

moon = a cooky

North Wind = a greedy person

South Wind = a baker

clouds = dough

The poem represents a further advance in the use of metaphor in that it is entirely metaphorical. In the Hughes poem, metaphor was used for illustration of a point; here the whole point is the extended metaphor itself. If your class has studied mythology at all, and is familiar with the idea of myth as man's attempt to explain the universe in terms he can understand, you might discuss with them this simple illustration of poetry as a vehicle for man's myth-making instinct. Humorously and with a light touch, Lindsay has created a myth explaining the lunar month--one just as consistent with the facts and having as much of a narrative basis with deities in action as any they have read in standard mythology.

Suggested Questions:

1. What metaphors can you find in this poem? What is being compared to what? List the object and the means of each of the metaphors.

2. When something inanimate is given human qualities, we have a special name for that metaphor. Can you think what it might be? --(Introduce personification, and make sure they understand it.)

3. What metaphor does not have its object stated anywhere in the poem? --(See if they can notice that the clouds-as-dough metaphor is implied only through the use of the verbs "knead" and "bakes." An introduction to the idea of submerged metaphor.)

4. Why does the poet use the North Wind as the greedy moon eater? Why doesn't he use the South Wind instead? --(In this hemisphere, at least, the North wind connotes cold, storm, and aggression; the South wind is gentle, calm, reviving. Once more, the idea of connotation.)

5. If you took the metaphors out of this poem, what would you have left? How do the metaphors in this poem differ from those in "Dreams"?

6. Discuss the following statement: "Vachel Lindsay has written a myth."

Suggested Activities:

1. It is not only poets who use personification. We use them all the time, so much so that they have almost become dead metaphors. For example, fill out the following, and then add to the list.

The _____sun. (smiling)

The _____brook. (babbling, chuckling)

The _____waves. (roaring)

The _____wind. (howling)

2. Re-write this poem, from another viewpoint. Pretend to be the North wind or the South wind. What will you say? How will you tell the myth. Use personification.

3. "Make Your Own Myth"--One day a goddess flies by the moon and gives the moon some new powers. The moon uses the powers against the North Wind. What powers does the goddess give the moon? What happens when the North Wind comes for his usual snack? Write an exciting story about this.

4. Find other stories or poems in which the (North) Wind is a mean and cruel character. Share them with a group, discussing how the North Wind is cruel. (Examples: "Poor Cock Robin" and Aesop's Fables.)

5. Pick out some object--a tree, the sun, a star, your desk, your pencil, a football, your family's car, even a fork. Pretend it is alive and has human thoughts and feelings. Write a story about it.

Reading Readiness:

"The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky"

1. What is a myth? Why were myths created? That is, why did people want them? What use were they?

2. Can a myth be funny?

Additional Poems:

1. "War," by Dan Roth, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 71.

2. "I Like to See It Lap the Miles," by Emily Dickinson (text below).

I LIKE TO SEE IT LAP THE MILES

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks;
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself downhill

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop--docile and omnipotent--
At its own stable door.

--Emily Dickinson

METAPHOR, PERSONIFICATION

Purpose: **To provide a summary discussion of the concepts of simple metaphor and personification.**

Selection: **"Last Snow," by Andrew Young**, reprinted in Modern British Poetry, ed. Louis Untermeyer. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1942.

Analysis:

Vocabulary: ride: a path or horse trail through the woods

spathe: a leaf-enclosed bud

If your class has had it up to the neck with nature poetry, they will probably groan when you give them this one. But if you ask them to look again at the metaphoric structure of this simple poem, they should begin to see that it is more than just another "O see the pretty flowers" sort of trash. The ivy is personified in a vivid image ("blunt webbed fingers"). Bring an ivy leaf to class so your students can see the force of the image. The snow is personified in a subdued metaphor ("painting tree trunks").

For a review of the idea of diction, and a good example of the way diction blends into figurative language, ask them to discuss the force of the word "unchristened." Very young and unnamed. ("Christen," by the way, provides a good opportunity for an exercise in etymology.) This connotation is picked up and made into metaphor in a later phrase, "no flower yet to tell their name," which is a reference to the christening ceremony in which the sponsors name the infant. This is a very subtle use of personification, and perhaps will require more discussion and explanation than it is worth. If so, drop it.

The most interesting figure is the final one contained in the last three lines. Ask your class to look up the definition of "spear." They will find that one of its literal meanings is the green shoot of a plant, as in "a spear of grass." Here is a classic illustration of the concept of dead metaphor. The metaphoric force of a "spear of grass" has been lost to such an extent that it is now one of the literal definitions of the word. Young brings the dead metaphor back to life by capitalizing on the several meanings of the word. The force of the metaphor is contained in the single word: spear of the plant as object, and spear-as-weapon as means. Winter is personified as a being who can be killed. The whole complex cluster of metaphor is tied to a vivid and realistic observation--a green shoot of a new plant thrusting through a dead and decaying leaf.

If you can bring your class to be aware of all the metaphoric forces operating in this simple little nature poem, they will have learned their lesson well. Since this poem is to be used for summary and review, we do not offer any suggested questions or activities. Throw the poem out for discussion and analysis. If the class bogs down, a listing of metaphors in terms of object and means should start them on the right track.

Reading Readiness:

"Last Snow"

1. (In the poem "April," we wondered how children felt about the change from winter to summer. Here is another poem that deals with the same emotion. Can your children feel, or imagine, a type of "new birth" in spring?)

Additional Poems:

1. "Hunting Song," by Donald Finkel, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 106.

2. "Splinter," by Carl Sandburg, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 86.

Reading Readiness:

"Splinter"

1. A splinter is usually thought of as a very small thing; you can barely see it, yet you are usually aware of it.

2. What is the smallest sound you can think of?

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INTRODUCTION

The idea we want to develop in this lesson is really quite simple. It is that a poem, like any other piece of writing, has a plan of organization, a development, a group of parts which relate to each other in certain ways.

The idea is important in two main ways. First, it is essential in understanding any particular poem. If a writer develops a series of related ideas that indicate a definite progression of thought, that is a different sort of poem from one which, say, tries to illustrate and illuminate a single insight or perception in a series of static illustrations. In other words, one of the many possible ways to understand a poem is to look at the way its different parts are related to each other. Consider closely, for example, the following poems.

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now,
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now of my three score years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

--A. E. Housman

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple host
Who took the flag today,
Can tell the definition
So clear, of victory,

As he, defeated, dying,
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Break, agonized and clear.

--Emily Dickinson

Housman is making a definite progression of thought: this is the situation, therefore I will do this. Dickinson is using a series of illustrations of the original paradox stated in the first two lines of her poem. One of the poems has a movement of ideas; the other is comparatively static. This is not to say that one is better than the other; they're just organized in different idea patterns, that's all. But the recognition of the pattern of each poem is essential to understanding it.

The second reason for considering these patterns is the relation of this concept to your students' own writing and speaking. We hope that by now they are beginning to learn that a composition or a talk can be organized in different ways, depending on its purpose and audience. Here, as elsewhere in the literature curriculum, we hope that your class will be able to see that all the devices we find in literature are the same as those all of us use all the time--including idea patterns. If a student wants to persuade someone to join the football team, he uses a different structure for his argument than he would to explain how he ended up slugging Johnnie in the nose at recess.

Let us try to make an important but difficult point here--more for you than for your students. Although all poems have some sort of structure of ideas, insofar as they are all sequences of words with some sort of logical or grammatical or associational sequence, no poem worth its salt can be reduced to a bare summary of its ideas. In other words, the description of the sequence of ideas in a poem--a paraphrase of its logical structure, as it were--is not the poem itself. Paraphrase is not poetry. It helps in understanding the poem, but the poem exists primarily in its own terms. Try an experiment. If you can reduce a paraphrase of Dickinson or Housman to fewer words than they have used, and still represent or suggest all the ideas in these poems, you will have written a better poem than they have. This is merely another illustration of a central thesis of this curriculum: you can't teach literature, you can only teach <u>about</u> it. An understanding of the way a poem works, including its pattern of ideas, is simply an aid to enjoying it in a more informed way.

A very important aid, we might add. As your students begin to deal with more mature poetry, and begin the process of interpretation, they will soon discover that much poetry means far more than it literally says, that it is suggestive, allusive, implicit rather than explicit. It is, in Robert Frost's words, the one way of saying one thing and meaning another. Full understanding and enjoyment of a poem depend to a large extent on our ability to recognize the relation of the various parts to the whole.

In the selections that follow we have made no attempt to cover the whole range of possible patterns to be found. The point is not to make your students know all the patterns of question-answer, topic sentence and illustration, statement and counter-statement, and the like. Rather, it is to get them familiar with the idea that the thoughts in a poem, as in any piece of writing, have some sort of arrangement, and that recognition of that arrangement is useful. Use the approach through the analysis of idea patterns to help your class understand the poetry, as well as to help them see that the organization of ideas is a primary problem for all writers, including themselves.

Idea Patterns
Teacher

Literature V-VI

ILLUSTRATION SERIES

Purpose: To introduce the idea pattern of a series of illustrations of a single idea.

Selection: "All But Blind," by Walter de la Mare, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy," by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 149.

Analysis:

In this poem we have the same sort of organization that is illustrated in Emily Dickinson's "Success Is Counted Sweetest." Here, however, the illustrations precede the general statement, whereas there the general statement began the poem.

But the point is the same. The pattern of ideas is a static one. The poet has a single point to make, and makes it through a series of illustrations. There is no progression of ideas; rather there is a single idea, illuminated and enriched by the contributing illustrations.

If your class is concerned with the organization of a composition, you might ask them to consider the extra force gained by saving the "point" of the poem until the last. The reader asks himself what all this series is going to do, and in the final stanza gets his answer. Such an organization is an interesting variation on the more common pattern of "topic sentence and illustrative example" which is the normal organization of a student theme. Explore with your class the added benefit of the suspense developed by the pattern of this poem. Why did the poet arrange his poem this way? If his last stanza had been first, would our attention have remained as constant?

The poem can serve as a good review for the concept of diction, as well as rhyme and stanza pattern. Notice the precise selection of the verbs in each stanza: the mole "gropes" in the darkness; the bat "twirls"; the owl "blunders." Each stanza is a self-contained idea as well as a self-contained sentence.

Suggested Questions:

1. When does the topic or main thought of this poem appear? Why do you think it is placed where it is?

2. What do the first three stanzas do?

3. What words are repeated in each stanza? Why?

but is never stated.

4. What would happen to the poem if the last stanza came first? Do you think the poet had any special reason for arranging his stanzas in the order in which he did? Explain your answer.

5. If you were to arrange this poem into two main parts, where would you make the divisions?

Suggested Activities:

1. Write a short composition in which you discuss the main idea of the poem.

2. Pick a series of 2 or 3 animals who all share the same characteristic. Describe the characteristic and apply it to yourself, in the same way de la Mare does.

Reading Readiness:

1. Are moles really blind? How are they able to find worms to eat?

2. Are bats really blind? How are they able to flit and dart through the air?

3. Are owls really blind? How are they able to get from one place to another?

4. Can you have good eyesight and still seem to be blind to the people around you?

Additional Poem:

IN THE DAYS WHEN THE CATTLE RAN

It was worth the while of a boy to live
In the days when the prairie lay wide
to the herds,
When the sod had a hundred joys to give
And the wind had a thousand words.
It was well to be led
Where the wild horses fed
As free as the swarming birds.

Not yet had the plough and the sickle
swept
The lily from meadow, the roses from
hill,
Not yet had the horses been haltered
and kept
In stalls and sties at a master's will.
With eyes wild-blazing,
Or drowsily grazing,
They wandered untouched by the thill.[1]

And the boy! With torn hat flaring,
With sturdy red legs which the thick
brambles tore,
As wild as the colts, he went faring
and sharing
The grasses and fruits which the brown
soil bore.
Treading softly for fear
Of the snake ever near,
Unawed by the lightning or black tem-
pest's roar.

But out on the prairie the ploughs
crept together,
The meadow turned black at the stroke
of the share,[2]
The shaggy colts yielded to clutch of
the tether,
The red lilies died, and the vines
ceased to bear.
And nothing was left to the boys
But the dim remembrance of joys
When the swift cattle ran,
Unhindered of man,
And their herders were free as the
clouds in the air.

--Hamlin Garland

[1]thill: a wagon-tongue
[2]share: a ploughshare or blade

Reading Readiness:

1. You often hear adults talk about the "good old days." Do you have any "good old days"? Were things really better before than they are now?

2. Have you ever had a favorite spot to play, and then had someone come and build a house there? How did you feel about it?

Idea Patterns
Teacher

Literature V-VI

CONTRAST OF IDEAS; DIALOGUE

Purpose: To illustrate the principle of dialogue and contrast as an organizing principle.

Selection: "On a Night of Snow," by Elizabeth Coatsworth, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 91.

Analysis: Vocabulary: marguerite (a pearl); spherical; hoar; portents

If you have used this poem in the unit on Speaker, (Persona), it will be interesting to pick it up again and take a look at its rhetorical pattern. Some poems lend themselves uniquely to a variety of poetic concepts, and children should be aware of the fact that a poem increases in value the more carefully a poet meshes together these devices.

Anyone who has lived around a cat for a period of time will appreciate Elizabeth Coatsworth's understanding of the contrasting views of the mistress and the cat. Frequently pet lovers, with good intentions, decide what would make an animal comfortable or happy, only to discover that the preferences of animals can be vastly different from our own. In our previous lesson with this poem, we touched on the idea that Elizabeth Coatsworth was able to take an imaginative leap into the mind of the cat. Here we can take a look at the structure of the poem and find the two stanzas representing a contradiction of ideas. In the first stanza the mistress is using all of her powers of persuasion to coax the cat to stay indoors. She lists the things which make her comfortable, namely avoidance of the cold snow and wild winds on a dark night, a warm fire, and a tasty snack. In contrast, in the second stanza the cat reveals his characteristic yen for what's on the other side of the door. He wants to satisfy his curiosity about those "strange voices" and magical surprises of night. He sees the outside as a place to investigate, to become involved "...things are yet to be done."

The two stanzas of the poem fit neatly the idea the poet is attempting to portray. Your children should be able to identify the two sides of the argument and notice that the poem is not divided equally into two stanzas, but that the first eight lines represent the mistress's point of view and the last six the cat's reply. Cats always have the last word. Notice that the last three words are the insistent demand--"Open the door!"

In order to recognize the rhetorical pattern more effectively, it might be helpful to have your students try to rearrange the lines so that the poem is more conversational. One suggested arrangement might be:

Cat, if you go outdoors you must walk in the snow.

Outdoors the wild winds blow, Mistress, and dark is the night.

You will come back with little white shoes on your feet,
Little white slippers of snow that have heels of sleet.

Strange voices cry in the trees, intoning strange lore,
And more than cats move, lit by our eyes' green light,
On silent feet where the meadow grasses hang hoar--

Stay by the fire, my Cat. Lie still, do not go.
See how the flames are leaping and hissing low.

Mistress, there are portents abroad of magic and might,
And things that are yet to be done.

I will bring you a saucer of milk like a marguerite,
So white and so smooth, so spherical and so sweet,
Stay with me, Cat. Outdoors the wild winds blow.

Open the door!

The dramatic situation is easily defined here. Ask your children to tell where they think the action in this poem takes place. They already have identified the main characters, but perhaps they could list the characteristics of each. What have they learned about the characters from the things they say in the poem? What time of day or night is it? If they were to make this into a one-act play, how would they describe the setting?

Suggested Questions:

1. This poem has two stanzas. Why do you think Elizabeth Coatsworth divided it after the first eight lines?

2. What reasons does the mistress give for staying indoors?

3. What reasons does the cat give for going outdoors?

4. Suppose this poem had been arranged as a more lively conversation between the two speakers. Using the same lines, rearrange the lines without changing their order, so that there is a speaking and answering back and forth between the mistress and her cat. Who would have the last word?

5. Where and when does this poem take place?

Suggested Activities:

1. Have one child be the Mistress, another the Cat. Memorize the lines and give a one-act play.

2. Draw a picture of the scenes portrayed in this poem. What colors would you use to portray the first stanza? What colors for the second?

3. Find pictures in magazines of the kind of person and the kind of cat portrayed in this poem. Make a caption under each picture, choosing lines from the poem.

Reading Readiness:

1. (Check the readiness for this poem in the Speaker, (Persona), unit. Is it still appropriate? Is there something you and your pupils have learned since then that would introduce this poem again? You might, for example, ask the students if they remember what the poem was about, who was talking in the poem, how each of them felt about the cold and snow outside. Then the pupils could read the poem again for the idea pattern.)

Additional Poems:

1. "Swift Things Are Beautiful," by Elizabeth Coatsworth, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 101.

2. "Meditatio," by Ezra Pound, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 61.

Reading Readiness:

"Swift Things are Beautiful"

1. (Same readiness suggestions as "On a Night of Snow".)

"Meditatio"

1. (Same readiness suggestions as "On a Night of Snow".)

Idea Patterns
Teacher

Literature V-VI

TOPIC SENTENCE, CATALOGUING OR LISTING

Purpose: To illustrate the catalogue or list as an organizational pattern.

Selection: "Catalogue," by Rosalie Moore, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 89.

Analysis:

If your children have been learning to identify the topic sentence in paragraphs, this poem offers an excellent opportunity to enrich the concept because each stanza has within it a main idea further illustrated or developed through a listing of examples. The entire poem is neatly arranged much like a catalog, the topic sentence of each stanza being the main entry, the rest of the stanza a description of various characteristics of a cat. For example, in the first stanza we have the topic sentence--"Cats sleep fat and walk thin." The rest of the stanza explains or illustrates this main idea. They sleep fat because they slump, they walk thin because they stretch--"pulling their ribs in." This is true in each stanza.

The title of the poem is a pun, and very appropriately fits the idea of the poem. Explain the meaning of pun as a play on words, and see if the children can think of other examples.

Most of the stanzas in this poem show contrasting characteristics of the cat. If we join the fourth and fifth stanzas, as it is printed in some poetry books, we find this feature in all but the third stanza.

Stanza 1 - "Cats sleep fat and walk thin."
Stanza 2 - "Cats wait in a lump, jump in a streak."
Stanza 4 and 5 - "...sing on a major scale..."
"...resound with an enclosed and private sound."
Stanza 6 - "A cat condenses...arch over it."
Stanza 7 - "...ready to go out...ready to come in."

The stanza pattern of this poem is interesting. Although it contains both rhythm and rhyme, there is no regularity about either one. Stanzas are different lengths, but each one is a complete little package with its unique poetic characteristics, a specific and important part of the complete catalogue.

Suggested Questions:

1. What is a catalogue? How is this poem like a catalogue?

2. If you were making an index for this catalogue, what would your main entries be?

3. What does Rosalie Moore mean by

> "This concert is for everybody, this
> Is wholesale."?

4. Name the topic sentence for each stanza.

5. Why do you think Rosalie Moore repeated the first line as her last line?

6. Most of the stanzas show contrasting characteristics of the cat. Name them.

Suggested Activities:

1. Perhaps the children can think of other characteristics of cats which are not included in the poem. Write an additional stanza for the poem.

2. Look through pet magazines, coloring books, or old calendars to find pictures illustrating the main idea of each stanza. Arrange on a bulletin board with the accompanying stanza.

3. Write a poem about dogs. What characteristics will you describe? What title might be appropriate?

Additional Poem:

1. "Angler's Choice," by H. J. Gottlieb, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 105.

Reading Readiness:

"Angler's Choice"

1. (Fly-tying is a favorite activity of many trout fishermen. They collect many exotic feathers and other materials from all over the world which are used in making the flies. Still, there are many standard flies--with names. All of the capitalized words in this poem are names of specific flies. So, a fishing poet, or poetic fisherman--whichever you choose--is having some fun with words.)

ED 075849

INTRODUCTION

We learn very early in our lives that complete objectivity in relating an event or circumstance is a very rare thing. We learn that a person's relationship to a story or event has a great deal to do with the way he tells it. He usually presents the story in such a manner that it will flatter his point of view, or at least agree with it, or reflect it. Very frequently, for example, in covering a national news item, different news sources give quite different accounts of the news, each reflecting its own interest.

A speaker's point of view can not only affect what is being said, but also the manner in which it is being said. Consider the effect of a rainy day on a boy who is to miss a baseball game, and on a farmer who has had two or three weeks of dry hot weather and desperately needs a few wet days for his crops. The enthusiasm, the tone, even the choice of words will be a reflection of each speaker's attitude toward the rain. Similarly, three people watching a burning building might have different impressions about the event based on information known only to them. This information determines their attitudes, which in turn determine the manner in which they tell of the event. One man might have lost some valuable papers; another, the owner of the property, knowing he was going to have to make some repairs, is thinking about the insurance claim; a third had just moved out the day before. Their respective accounts of the fire would be very different even though the event would be exactly the same in each case. Their point of view, the way they "see" an event, and, consequently, the way in which they relate that event, would make the difference in their stories.

In literature, "point of view" refers usually to the narrator of a story, or the speaker in a poem. If the speaker is involved in the story and uses the "I" pronoun in his narration, then we call this the "first person point of view." This is usually a very subjective version, with the speaker's feelings and attitudes as important to the story as the event. The other point of view is called "third person," and is typified by a narrator who is removed from the action and is reporting, more or less objectively. This narrator is not a character himself, but usually simply the rhetorical device used by the writer.

Your students should have no real difficulty in distinguishing between these two "voices." They have discovered already, undoubtedly, that stories change depending on who is doing the telling. In reading poetry, your students will discover how valuable it is to the complete understanding of the poem if the speaker's point of view is considered. It not only helps when one is considering the event or story or subject in the poem, but knowing point of view also gives one a valuable insight into the feelings, the attitudes, and the interests of the speaker himself.

Point of view, then, is not only a technical device involving a first or third speaker, but also an impression the reader gets of the attitude being expressed, of the "tone" of the poem. The selections that follow should give your students some practice in developing an increased sensitivity to what they read.

POINT OF VIEW (First Person)

Purpose: To examine a poem in which the first-person speaker's attitude is explicitly stated.

Selection: "Deer Hunt," by Judson Jerome, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, p. 36.

Analysis:

Since people rarely hunt just for food anymore, you might get into discussion of this poem by having the class--particularly the boys, of course--discuss why people hunt today. Out of the discussion will probably emerge the notion that hunting is a romantic, outdoor sport, an "initiation rite" (though students surely won't use this term) by which a boy proves himself to be a man.

Such a discussion offers an interesting frame for examining the point of view of the speaker in "Deer Hunt." The hunter is young, and feels the obligation to "prove" himself a man in the eyes of the other hunters by taking a deer--yet his direct statements show that in reality he fears and despises what he feels forced to do. The class should have no trouble finding statements that show his fear. (He listens apprehensively for snakes and waits "in fear" for the appearance of a deer; he "flinches" at the sound of rifles; his knuckles "whiten" on the gun which he finds "monstrous.")

The class may perhaps be familiar with the phrase "coming of age." If so, it should help them understand what the speaker means when he says that in gripping the gun he is gripping "the edge of age." Try to make them see that the hunter has a dual attitude toward this way of "becoming a man" --he feels it is necessary (his friends and relatives "require" a slain deer as evidence of manhood), but the last lines of the poem show that the act of "manhood" he finally performs is sickening to him. In fact, in the context of the whole poem he seems to mean just the opposite of his comment that, in taking a deer, he has become a man. Since the unit following this one defines irony as saying one thing and meaning another, this might be a good opportunity to introduce the term.

Suggested Questions:

1. The speaker in the poem makes only one direct statement about the deer he is hunting. What is it? What do you think it shows about his attitude towards them?

2. Can you make a guess about the hunter's age? Is he a "man" yet, or not? How do you know?

3. How can you tell the hunter is afraid?

4. Does the hunter really want to shoot a deer? How do you know?

5. Do you think "manhood" means the same thing to the hunter as to his cousin and his mountain friends?

6. Do you agree with the hunter, or with his relatives and friends?

Suggested Activity:

1. If any of your students have hunted, ask them to tell about their feelings during their first hunting experience. Were they similar to or different from those of the speaker in the poem?

POINT OF VIEW (First Person)

Purpose: To examine a poem in which the first-person speaker's attitudes are indirectly stated.

Selection: "Lament," by Edna St. Vincent Millay, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 122.

Analysis:

This poem may take a little more digging than "Deer Hunt," since the first person point of view is more subtle and indirect. The first thing you will want to do after you have read this poem to the class is to set up the dramatic situation--who is the speaker, what has happened, and when did it happen? It will not be difficult to determine that a father has died, and it is probably the children's mother who is explaining what things need to be done in order for "Life" to go on. No doubt the father's death is very recent. The family, perhaps alone for the first time after his death, are at breakfast. Mother very tersely explains to the two children how she plans to make life go on. Throughout the poem she exhibits a courage that is admirable, helping the children to face this sad event with a minimum of grief and concern.

Once your children have determined the dramatic situation, they will be able to understand and work with clues concerning the point of view. In our study of this concept we are interested not only in what has been said but also in the way a thing is said. We have already discussed some of the things the speaker of the poem has said to the children which show her determination to help herself and the children to adjust to a very difficult situation. We get further insight into her feelings by noting the short, chipped sentences as she talks with the children, giving a sense of urgency to the situation and perhaps indicating an effort on her part to restrain her own grief.

The reader gets a pretty good idea of the kind of person this mother is by the way she speaks. Her first remarks are made in a rather determined manner. She'll waste no time in beginning life over:

> "I'll make you little jackets;
> I'll make you little trousers..."

For a sentimental moment she recalls the things she has found in the dead man's pockets at other times. She will give these to the children as a remembrance. She doesn't intend to grieve for a long time over the tragedy:

> "Life must go on,
> And the dead be forgotten..."

Reading Readiness:

"Lament"

1. Vocabulary: lament

2. When someone in a family dies, everyone is very sad. During the sadness someone will probably say, "Life must go on." What do you think is meant by that statement? If someone said it to you, how would it make you feel?

3. When someone dies, what does he leave behind?

Suddenly she is brought back to the present and its concerns:

"Anne, eat your breakfast;
Dan take your medicine;"

Both lines short and to the point.

The repetition of the line--"Life must go on" seems to indicate that she is attempting to convince herself of the fact; it isn't until the last line that we detect a note of despair when she says--"I forget just why."

The purpose of this poem is not to relate an incident as much as it is to indicate the speaker's attitude toward the death of the children's father, and by considering point of view we can determine quite a bit about her feelings toward her husband, toward his death, toward the children, and toward herself.

Suggested Questions:

1. Who is the speaker in this poem? What kind of a person is she?

2. Describe what you think happened before the poem takes place.

3. What lines tell you how the speaker feels about life after the death of the children's father?

4. What things do you learn about the family in this poem? --(They were probably poor--old coats; the father used tobacco; two children, one had to take medicine for some reason; Anne was the younger of the two; etc.)

5. Why does the speaker repeat the line: "Life must go on"? Why does she add "I forget just why" in the last line?

6. Do you admire the speaker in the poem? Why.

Suggested Activities:

1. Write a story about what happened before this poem took place. (You might consider: How did the father die? How old are Dan and Anne? Why did Dan have to take medicine? What was Dan saving his pennies for?)

2. Find a picture, or draw one yourself, of the kind of person you think the speaker in this poem is.

Point of View
Teacher

Literature V-VI

POINT OF VIEW (Third person narrator)

Purpose: To develop awareness of how third person point of view operates to show attitudes of the poet, the characters in the poem, and the reader himself.

Selection: "The Trap," by William Beyer, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 108.

Analysis:

One can easily visualize the setting in which this poem takes place. A farmer, plagued by a fox killing his chickens, has set a trap. Finally he catches the culprit, and early one morning observes the wounded fox attempting to escape through the fence. While his wife is busily preparing a berry pie, he relates the incident, half to himself, and half to inform her. His wife makes no audible comment, but has her own thoughts about the incident and continues to pursue her work.

The poem is told from an observer's point of view--third person narrator, and the reader is allowed to form his own opinion of the situation, the man, and his wife.

There are several attitudes which can be studied in this poem: the attitude of the man toward the fox, his feelings about the trapping, his attitude toward his wife, the wife's attitude toward the trapping incident, her attitude toward her husband, and the reader's attitude toward each of these. If your children are a relatively mature group you might also get them to comment on what they think the author's attitude is toward the events in the poem.

A discussion in your class concerning these aspects of attitude will lead to many opinions. Get your children to support their ideas with lines from the poem.

A shift in mood is effected by the following lines:

> "Watching the blue smoke rise and disappear
> In the movement of the air.
> Scratching his red nose slowly,
> Thinking something grave for a long moment,
> He stared out of the bright window."

It would be interesting to discuss what mood these lines seem to indicate, what the man might have been thinking and what attitude they seem to reveal. Will any of your class see that the farmer is concerned about the suffering of the fox?

If your class could get into a discussion of the man's attitude toward his wife, they should support their opinions with lines like:

"The old man looked around the kitchen
To see if anyone was listening."

He probably hoped she was listening, but wasn't concerned that she made no overt reply, since he continued his monologue. He understood her silence.

If you discuss the wife's attitude toward the trapping, the children will no doubt mention--"Smiled almost secretly to herself." You will want to ask if her smile was one of amusement at the incident, or amusement at her husband's "rattling on" about it, or a serene confidence in his basic humaneness.

Throughout your discussion you will be getting their attitudes toward the entire poem. Be sure to mention that each of them may have different feelings toward everything discussed according to their attitudes toward trapping foxes, their understanding of the man's attitude, and their understanding of the wife's reaction to her husband.

One thing is important. Do not drag the poem into such a lengthy discussion that your children become tired of it. The questions are designed to bring out salient points to consider, but you should not feel that you need to use all of them.

Suggested Questions:

1. What is the dramatic situation in this poem?

2. Who is narrating this event?

3. How did the old man feel about the red fox? How do you know?

4. Do you think it really mattered to the old man whether his wife was listening or not? Use sections of the poem to support your view.

5. Was his wife listening? How do you know? Why do you think she "smiled almost secretly to herself"?

6. How would you describe the man? his wife? the trapping? (This question leads to the reader's attitudes toward each.)

Suggested Activity:

1. There has been a fight between two boys on the playground because one boy shoved the other boy when they were waiting their turns to bat at the softball game. Act out the scene with several of the children in the classroom so that you can get a feeling for the problem. Then pretend you are one of each of the following persons explaining all about the problem to the principal. Show how a person's explanation can change according to his "point of view":

a) The boy who was shoved.

b) The boy who shoved the first boy.

c) One of the other boys in the line who saw it happen.

d) The playground teacher who happened to be on duty that day.

Reading Readiness:

"The Trap"

1. When a man and an animal are enemies, the man usually tries to capture or kill the animal--and the animal tries to escape. How do you think the man would feel when he finally succeeds in defeating the animal? Would he be happy or unhappy?

POINT OF VIEW (Impersonal)

Purpose: To examine how a poet may reveal strong attitudes through a seemingly impersonal point of view.

Selection: "Fueled," by Marcie Hans, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 83.

Analysis:

"Fueled" brings out the idea that what is familiar to us, no matter how unusual, becomes quite ordinary. There are little miracles going on constantly around us which barely get a nod of the head, simply because we are used to them: the miracle of birth, the changing seasons, animal preparation to accommodate changes in temperature. . . to mention only a few. Your children could think of others.

This poem is an example of the impersonal point of view. The author is expressing the irony of man's great attention given to the firing of a rocket while all the while little seedlings are pushing their way "into outer space" with no one taking any special note. Her sympathies are for the seedling. This seems evident from the comparisons she makes to show her point of view--

"rocket tore a tunnel"	vs.	"seedling urged its way"
"everybody cheered"	vs.	"no one even clapped"

The poem is rich in metaphors. If your children are familiar with the submerged metaphor it would be good to bring out the comparisons made by:

"wings of fire" -- burst of explosives

"thicknesses of black" -- underground

"heavy ceiling of the soil" -- top layer of earth

"outer space" -- open air

"fueled" (for seedling) -- beginning growth

Another interesting feature of this poem is the length of lines. Your children may have some ideas as to why Marcie Hans chose to write her poem in this way. Does it make any difference in the way one would read the poem aloud? That question might be more easily pondered if one were to write the poem out as prose:

> Fueled by a million man-made wings of fire, the rocket tore a tunnel through the sky, and everybody cheered. Fueled only by a thought from God, the seedling urged its way through the thicknesses of black, and as it pierced the heavy ceiling of the soil, and launched itself up into outer space, no one even clapped.

We don't notice the beauty of language as much in prose; our reading of the paragraph does not seem to carry the intense feelings we get when we see the poem as it is written by the poet. This is because cutting the language into brief lines isolates words and word groups, and thus forces us to pay more individual attention to them. The result is increased emotional impact, as, for instance, in the concluding phrase "no one even clapped," which somehow achieves dramatic force by being drawn out over four lines.

Suggested Questions:

1. Who is the speaker in this poem?

2. Why is a rocket compared to a seedling? How are they alike? How are they different?

3. How does the speaker feel about the seedling's launch compared to the rocket firing? Does he feel that the seedling really made a more impressive "launch"? How can you tell?

4. What metaphors can you find in the poem? What comparisons do the metaphors make?

5. Which of the two "miracles" do you think is greater? Explain your answer.

6. Does the title fit the idea that the poet is trying to get across? Explain your answer.

Suggested Activities:

1. Tell about a time when you found a plant growing in what most people would consider an impossible place. For instance, have you ever seen a plant push its way through the blacktop on your playground? What other "impossible" places have you seen where plants are growing? Your class might like to take a walk around your school to look for examples.

2. Think of other comparisons of man's great accomplishments versus a similar miracle of nature. For instance, you could compare the invention of the airplane to the flight of a bird. Write a short poem about your idea.

Reading Readiness:

"Fueled"

1. Have you ever thought of a growing seed being something like a rocket? How might they be alike? How would they be different?

2. Do you pay more attention to a growing seed or to a rocket?

Additional Poems:

"The Housewife's Lament," an American Folk Song, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 74.

"Too Blue," by Langston Hughes, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 73.

"For a Dead Kitten," by Sara Henderson Hay, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 92.

"Fish Story," by Richard Armour, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 104.

"Boy with Frogs," by Sy Kahn, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 30.

"Fifteen," by William Stafford, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 30.

"Loneliness," by Brooks Jenkins, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 55.

Reading Readiness:

"The Housewife's Lament"

1. (Do you have a recording of "The Streets of Laredo," sometimes called "The Cowboy's Lament"? This poem goes with that music, and follows the same general theme, only in this case it's a housewife instead of a cowboy. The Smothers Brothers have even parodied the tune and theme on a record. The children would enjoy hearing the original "Lament" as well as the parody--and thus would probably enjoy "The Housewife's Lament" even more.)

"Too Blue"

1. What does a person mean when he says, "I'm blue"?

2. Why do people refer to Monday as "blue" Monday?

3. When were you "blue"? How did you feel?

"Fish Story"

1. What is a fish story?

2. What kind of story would it be if the fish told it?

3. What might the fish say about his adventures with baits, hooks, worms, etc.?

ED 075849

INTRODUCTION

Talking about symbolism as an element in literature may smack of intellectualism and sophisticated literary criticism. Why, then, do we suggest teaching something about symbols in literature at the fifth and sixth grade levels, to students who are merely beginning the study of poetry? It is a fair question; let us suggest some answers.

Symbolism can be a complex and subtle concept that requires some reading experience. It is also, however, a very basic and common elemen in the process of the human imagination. In fact, your students should soon find that they are aware of the notion and the meaning of symbolism, and how it works in connection with man's thinking. If, for example, you ask your class to consider a wedding band, you will probably generate a broad definition of symbolism. Some of your students will mention that the object is a ring, a band of metal shaped in a particular fashion to be worn on a certain finger. The definition would not stop there, however. Most of the class would agree that this is not an ordinary ring to be worn by anyone. They would add that the ring is more than a ring; it suggests marriage, trust, and love. The ring, then, means something. With this understanding, your class has broadly defined the notion of symbol. Another example even closer will further illustrate the point.

Every morning the students in elementary classrooms across this country stand by their desks and "Pledge Allegiance." It is a mechanical act and because of this it shows what happens to symbols when they become completely accepted by a common, or national, imagination. The reason that men take off their hats when the flag parades by, the reason we have special rules for the displaying of the flag, the reason that there are rules for the destruction of the flag, the reason we pledge allegiance, point to the fact that the flag is not simply a flag, much less a piece of colored cloth. It is an idea, a representation of the various meanings we have packed into it. The flag is a symbol, standing for national tradition, laws, ideals, and identification. There is not a single student in your class who believes he is really saluting a design of colored cloth, hanging in the corner. For another example, try the Christian cross.

A symbol, then, is a common enough item in our daily thinking patterns. It is, in a very wide sense, an object which is really two things at once. It is a concrete element which can be seen--a ring or a flag--but it is also an abstract idea which cannot be seen, but only imagined. The idea becomes as important a part of the meaning of the object as the object itself.

A literary symbol is naturally more limited, in that it is concerned with a given subject matter, but the theory and the definition work in the same way. A literary symbol is a device within a work which the author uses to suggest some other meaning than the object itself. The writer has taken an object and done much the same sort of thing that we have done with our national flag. He has poured into the object certain kinds of ideas which make that object take on greater meaning. The rose, for

instance, is a traditional literary symbol. Poets in the tradition of English and American literature have used the rose to suggest beauty, purity, and love. As the symbol developed in English poetry, readers knew that the flower was no longer just a rose, but stood for the abstractions that are human ideals.

The following poems have been selected to lead your students to a gradual understanding of the literary symbol and its functions in the work of art. Some have been selected because they should show your students that objects in poetry can mean more than they appear to mean on the concrete level. Some poems are examples of a poet's use of a natural object to express ideals and values. The recommendation here is that you avoid any formal definition of literary symbol, and work toward giving your students an understanding of the function of the symbol in poetry.

SYMBOL

Purpose: To illustrate the use of symbolism in poetry.

Selection: "Old Ironsides," by Oliver Wendell Holmes (text below).

OLD IRONSIDES

September 14, 1830

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky;
Beneath it rung the battle shout,
And burst the cannon's roar--
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
And waves were white below,
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee--
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The eagle of the sea!

Oh, better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
And there should be her grave;
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms,
The lightning and the gale!

--Oliver Wendell Holmes

Analysis: Vocabulary: ensign; vanquished; harpies (scavengers, carrion-eaters).

This poem about an American warship that gained fame during the war of 1812 is an excellent example of the concept and development of symbolism in literature. The poet, beginning with a note of irony--"Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!"--is pleading the case against the destruction of the ship. His argument is grounded in the idea that the ship is more than an object made of wood and metal; the ship represents glory, heroism, and national honor. The description of the ship under fire at sea suggests that its demolishing by "the Harpies of the shore" would be an unfitting end. The poet suggests that it would be better if the ship would sink at sea, where it was at home.

Clearly then the ship is more than a ship. For the poet to argue so strongly against the destruction of Old Ironsides, he is suggesting that more than a ship will be wrecked. Dreams, glories, achievement, and national pride will also go. The poet's words seem to have rung true. Not only was Old Ironsides spared the fate of demolition in 1830, when this poem was written, but it still floats today in Boston harbor as a kind of museum, a symbol in every sense of the word.

Much of the effectiveness of the poet's argument, and the overall strength of the poem, depend on Holmes' use of imagery. Since this concept is a familiar one to your students, they will have no trouble recognizing the superb visual imagery, throughout the poem, of Old Ironsides at sea. There is also effective use of auditory imagery in the lines

> Beneath it rung the battle shout,
> And burst the cannon's roar--.

In fact the entire poem might be suggestive of one long battle, in which the reader sees Old Ironsides emerge victorious.

Suggested Questions:

1. The poet is suggesting that "Old Ironsides" not be destroyed, even though he seems to know it would no longer be effective in warfare. Does this give you a clue as to how the poet feels about the warship? Describe that feeling as you understand it.

2. Since the poet feels so strongly about the warship, he must see something in it besides boards, rope, staffs, flags, and guns. What does the ship represent for the speaker of the poem?

3. How does this ship become similar to other symbols, like wedding rings, the flag, or an old watch?

4. How does the poet describe the ship's action in combat? Point out the various kinds of imagery in the poem.

Suggested Activities:

1. "Old Ironsides" was the nickname of the USS Constitution. Look up some information on the warship and make a report to your class.

2. You have seen pictures of, or may have actually seen, the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument. What does the Statue of Liberty look like? What does she hold in her hand? What does this symbolize? In what way does the Washington Monument work as a symbol?

SYMBOL

Purpose: To continue the study of symbolism in poetry.

Selection: "The Tiger," by William Blake (text below).

THE TIGER

Tiger, Tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, Tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

--William Blake

Analysis: Vocabulary: symmetry; sinews; anvil.

This famous poem is taken from a volume of verse called Songs of Experience and is frequently compared to its companion piece, "The Lamb," from Songs of Innocence. Blake uses these animals as representations of ideas, so they serve us well in our illustration of literary symbol.

Perhaps the first thing one notices about this poem is that the tiger becomes vivid. His "fearful symmetry" and the "burning bright" of his eyes are in contrast with the lamb, which has long been a symbol of gentleness. Another very striking quality of this poem is the lack of imagery which directly describes the tiger. Blake uses imagery in suggesting in stanzas 3 and 4 that the animal has been forged in a blacksmith's shop, but the tiger, itself, is not described. Yet all would agree that the sense of "tigerness" comes across to the reader. It seems clear that the poet was not concerned directly with the visual tiger, but with the effect the tiger would have on people. Blake's concern seems to be not the tiger but its meaning. What does the tiger represent? The tiger, then, is more than a tiger. He is a symbol of human ideas. Our problem as readers is to determine what specific ideas are here.

After reading the poem to your class and clearing up any vocabulary problems, you can then let them suggest the effect of the tiger on them as readers. You might suggest that they consider the words the poet has chosen to associate with the tiger, "fearful," "fire," "deadly terror." They will have no trouble recognizing the awful power here. Perhaps the clue is the comparison to the lamb. The tiger and the lamb are opposites, and the poet asks whether the creator of the gentle beauty of the lamb could be the same as the creator of the tiger.

Blake is a complex poet. What appears to be a simple poem takes on sophisticated meaning. How far you should go in reading him cannot be answered here. Your students will tell you that. There is no question that they will enjoy this poem, and there is no question that they will see that in addition to the tiger as animal, there is also present in the poem the tiger as symbol. Their understanding of that symbol, demonstrated through their discussion, will be your safest and surest guide on how far to go with your teaching.

Suggested Questions:

1. Keeping in mind the lamb as contrast, what is the nature of the tiger in this poem? --(Terror, fierceness.)

2. If the lamb is used as a symbol for innocence, what do you suppose the tiger represents? --(Answers will vary: experience, evil, terror.)

3. What do you think the poet is attempting when he refers to the fire, the furnace, the anvil, and the hammer? --(Perhaps he is suggesting that the tiger needed effort to be created--hot, hard work.) Do you suppose the poet is using the tiger as a symbol for the devil? --(Discuss.)

4. What is the tiger's "symmetry?" --(Stripes.) How is it fearful? --(Discuss.) Does this notion of fearfulness add to the symbolism in the poem?

Suggested Activities:

1. William Blake was an artist as well as a poet. He often illustrated his poems with drawings. Find a book of Blake's paintings and look up "The Tiger."

2. Make some drawings of your own to illustrate "The Tiger" and "The Lamb."

SYMBOL

Purpose: To illustrate further the use of symbol in poetry.

Selection: "The Lamb," by William Blake (text below).

THE LAMB

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, wooly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild;
He became a little child.
I, a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

--William Blake

Analysis:

The significance of the symbolism in this poem comes when the reader sees the first verse as a kind of descriptive statement and the second verse as the meaning of the statement. The first stanza is primarily descriptive, suggesting the innocence and the gentleness of the lamb. The second stanza suggests that the lamb is the child, or perhaps all children, in that children are innocent and gentle. The question he asks about the creator of a lamb is an attempt on the poet's part to use the already existing Christian symbol of Christ as lamb. These particular items need not be a stumbling block in your teaching. Your children need not be given a theology lesson, but they should see that the lamb is being used by the poet to suggest something more than its own nature. It has become a symbol for innocence, goodness, and gentleness.

Suggested Questions:

1. In the last lines of the poem the lamb is compared to the child. In what way do you think the lamb is a child? --(Innocent, gentle.)

2. The speaker in the poem is suggesting that the lamb was created by a mild creator. He also suggests that the lamb is child-like. What other kinds of things does the lamb seem to represent? --(Goodness, purity, simplicity.)

3. Do you know of any other animals that have been used as symbols? --(Lion is a symbol of royalty; fox is a symbol of cunning; owl symbolizes wisdom; etc.)

Suggested Activity:

1. Select some animals and design a system of symbolism where you make the animals stand for some ideal or idea. For example, what animal would you think best typifies courage? Cowardice? Cleverness? Stupidity? Energy? Laziness? And so on.

ED 075849

INTRODUCTION

One of the points we hope you have been trying to make to your students throughout these lessons is that the devices of poetry are the same as those of normal speech, not special uses of language reserved for a strange group of people called poets. Nowhere is this point more obvious than in a discussion of hyperbole, for a constant use of this device is one of the most distinctive features of the speech patterns of young people. Slang and distortion--"dig it," "cool"--are probably paramount, but hyperbole ranks very high.

Hyperbole is simply exaggeration. But it is exaggeration used for the sake of effect, for vividness or emphasis, rather than in the hope of being believed. No one really believes that anyone ever "hit that ball a mile," or that a window "broke into a million pieces." When we say that our picnic was attended by "literally millions of ants," we mean just the opposite, that there were not literally that many ants around; we are merely intensifying the hyperbole. Once your students get the idea of hyperbole, they should be able to think of any number of examples from their own speech. "I couldn't sleep a wink all night," "I was so sick I thought I was gonna die," etc.

The essence of hyperbole is, as we said, exaggeration, which is really nothing but a sort of discrepancy, a variation from normal response. This variation exists on the other side as well, and this other side of the coin is understatement ("Quite a little shower," said Noah). For some reason, understatement is not nearly as common a device in the speech of young people. Far more common is irony.

Irony is a very complex and subtle concept, but can be treated simply enough on the introductory level so that your class will have no trouble developing an elementary understanding. Irony fundamentally involves discrepancy, or variation, but in a slightly different fashion from hyperbole or understatement. The simplest sort of irony is that in which one thing is said but the opposite is meant. This sort of verbal irony is familiar to your students. If any of them has ever looked out the window at the pouring rain and remarked, "What a lovely day," they have been using irony. If they have ever replied "Oh, sure," to a fellow student's hyperbolic statement, their disbelief has been expressed ironically.

Another kind of irony is irony of situation, in which some sort of reversal or variation from normal expectations occurs. The familiar story-pattern of the man who flees from a curse or threat, only to find it awaiting him at his new destination, is the basic form of irony of situation. There are other sorts of irony as well, which are difficult to name or describe. The expenditure of vast energy for little results is ironic (Morris Bishop's "Ambition"); so is the idea implied in Max Eastman's "At the Aquarium." In its broadest sense, irony is an attitude or habit of mind which is constantly aware of the discrepancy between appearance and reality.

But you need hardly get this philosophic with your students. The main goal is to introduce them to the ideas involved in hyperbole and irony, and to get them to observe the operation of these devices both in poetry and in their own speech. The rest will come in due course.

HYPERBOLE

Purpose: To introduce examples of hyperbole and to discuss the reasons a poet has for using the device.

Selection: "Grey Goose," by Huddie Ledbetter (Pickle, p. 130).

Analysis:

Since students at this level are probably familiar with the conventions of the "tall tale," they should easily see the hyperbole in Huddie Ledbetter's poem "Grey Goose." After an introductory discussion of exaggeration and its uses, introduce the term hyperbole and ask the students to find all the examples of the device in the poem. Of course they will see that the adventure of the grey goose is pure fantasy. No bird could be as "tough" as the one in the poem; when you shoot a goose, he does come down, and is rather easily feather-picked, cooked, and eaten.

After making this point, you might ask the class why the poet is using hyperbole. Like the tellers of tall tales, is he exaggerating purely for entertainment value, or is there an implicit statement about freedom--about man's inability really to "bring down" a wild creature? In any case, the grey goose clearly has the last laugh (or quack), and after what he has been through, he certainly deserves it!

You needn't make a point of the negro dialect of the poem, since students have probably encountered it before in traditional negro spirituals or in the songs of Stephen Foster. But if the question does come up, you might briefly discuss the career of Huddie Ledbetter (better known as "Leadbelly"), who was one of the most renowned black folk artists of our century.

We include among the additional titles a couple of love poems. You should be able to generate a good discussion on why hyperbole is such a standard device in love poems and in songs. Send students to popular love ballads on records for examples of hyperbole.

Suggested Questions:

1. There is a definite "story" in this poem, with a beginning, middle, and end. Can you re-tell it in your own words?

2. What happens to the grey goose at the end of the poem? Are you glad things turn out as they do? Why or why not?

3. Do you believe a goose could take six weeks to fall from the sky? How many other exaggerations like this are there in the poem?

4. What purpose do you think the poet has in using all this hyperbole? Is he just trying to "pull the reader's leg"?

Suggested Activities:

1. Have the class listen to themselves and their families and make a list of the hyperboles they hear.

2. Ask the students to collect examples of hyperboles from popular songs and discuss them in class.

3. Bring to class and play some ballads ("The Frozen Logger," "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," etc.) which depend heavily on hyperbole for effect.

Additional Poems:

1. "freddy the rat perishes," by Don Marquis (Poems to Enjoy, p. 41).

2. "A Red, Red Rose," by Robert Burns (see text below).

3. "O Ruddier than the Cherry," by John Gay (see text below).

Reading Readiness:

"freddy the rat perishes"

1. (It is very important to explain that archy is a cockroach. He types his messages by climbing to the top of the typewriter and jumping down onto the keys. He isn't heavy enough for the shift key, so there are no capitals. There is no punctuation because it's too much trouble for archy to climb all the way to the top of the typewriter and jump down just for a period or comma. After explaining this, you might ask--:)

2. Do you think poems and stories written by archy would be serious or humorous?

"A Red, Red Rose"

1. Vocabulary: luve - love
a' - all
gang - go
wi' - with
fare thee weel - fare thee well

2. (You can see by this poem how important it is to introduce a concept such as hyperbole from the children's experiences. Everyone uses hyperbole; people in love especially.)

A RED, RED ROSE

O, my luve is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
O, my luve is like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I:
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve!
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

—Robert Burns

O RUDDIER THAN THE CHERRY

O ruddier than the cherry,
O sweeter than the berry,
O nymph[1] more bright
Than moonshine night,
Like kidlings[2] blithe and merry.
Ripe as the melting cluster[3];
No lily has such luster,
Yet hard to tame,
As raging flame,
And fierce as storms that bluster.

--John Gay

[1] nymph: a lovely young woman [2] kidlings: baby goats

[3] cluster: i.e., of grapes

VERBAL IRONY

Purpose: To introduce the concept of verbal irony.

Selection: "Husbands and Wives," by Miriam Hershenson (Pickle, p. 58).

Analysis:

In introducing the idea of irony to your students, it is probably the best idea to start with the most simple kind--verbal irony. The idea is easy to grasp: the speaker says one thing but means the opposite. In discussion, you should be able to point out how frequently your students use this sort of irony themselves. It is almost automatic. A child spills the milk, and the parent or a big brother says "Nice going." On the playground, a poorly thrown ball brings the instant remark, "Nice toss."

The same technique is used in this poem. Clearly the author means just the opposite of what she says in the last two lines. Here, of course, the irony is used as a means of indirect comment on one of the paradoxes of human relationships--that people can live together and still be distant--rather than as a vehicle for sarcasm, but the basic verbal device is the same. Ask your class what advantage is gained by this sort of indirection.

Suggested Questions:

1. What do you think the point of this poem is? How do you know? Does the author tell you anywhere what that point is?

2. Why do you think husbands and wives might not have much to say to each other?

3. When the author says "So much talk" what does she really mean? What do we call this? Have you ever used this way of speaking?

Suggested Activities:

1. Make a list of all the uses of verbal irony you hear or use yourself. Keep a record of them.

Reading Readiness:

"Husbands and Wives"

1. (You may need to introduce the concept of subway, if your children have never seen one. You also may want to introduce the cameo effect of people's faces in the windows of moving trains. It may help set the scene for the poem.)

2. Do your parents talk to each other? Do you talk with them?

3. If you went for a ride with your parents and no one spoke to anyone else, what would you think?

IRONY OF SITUATION

Purpose: To introduce the term irony of situation.

Selection: "Dust," by Sydney King Russell (Pickle, p. 66).

Analysis:

If your students have understood the idea of irony in the previous poem, they should be ready for this example of irony of situation.

Poor Agatha Morley. Fought dust all her life, forgetting the biblical reminder that "dust thou art." Ironic, isn't it? Your students needn't know the Bible or the funeral service to appreciate the basic irony of the situation. Introduce the term irony of situation, if you wish, to distinguish this sort of irony from the earlier verbal sort. They should be able to make the distinction. Here, there is nothing in what the poet says that is ironic; we can take everything directly as stated. The irony lies rather in the situation: Agatha Morley the dust hater, now surrounded by dust and soon to be dust herself.

Suggested Questions:

1. What was Agatha Morley's main preoccupation during life? What is her situation now?

2. You have learned the term irony, when it is used as a way of saying one thing and meaning the opposite. Are there any opposites in this poem? What are they?

3. This sort of irony is frequently called "irony of situation." In what way would you say this kind of irony differs from the earlier kind you looked at?

Suggested Activities:

1. Have you ever been in an ironic situation? If so, write about it, pointing out the irony involved. If you can't remember any, make up a situation and write about that.

Reading Readiness:

"Dust"

1. Suppose a friend of yours did not like fried eggs. Suppose, also, that your friend planned all year to go to a summer camp for a whole month. When he got to camp he discovered that fried eggs were served every morning for breakfast. How would your friend feel? How would you feel when he told you about it?

Additional Poems:

1. "On the Vanity of Earthly Greatness," by Arthur Guiterman (Pickle, p. 68).

2. "Earth," by John Hall Wheelock (Pickle, p. 85).

3. "The Microscope," by Maxine Kumin (Pickle, p. 53).

Reading Readiness:

"On the Vanity of Earthly Greatness"

1. Vocabulary: vanity, mastodon

2. What do you mean when you say, "Here today, gone tomorrow"?

3. What would you like to do that you would want people to remember 500 years from now?

"Earth"

1. How do intelligent human beings act?

2. Do you think an intelligent person would destroy himself?

"The Microscope"

1. Vocabulary: Anton Leeuwenhoek, Dutch, gathered dust

2. If you could look into a drop of water, what would you see?

3. How many of you have looked through a microscope? (If you have one in the classroom it could be used to good advantage here.)

4. How do you think the inventor of the microscope felt the first time he looked into his new instrument?

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RHYME

(END RHYME, MASCULINE AND FEMININE RHYME, INTERNAL RHYME, OFF-RHYME)

REVISED VERSION, FOR TRYOUT 1971-72

In response to the recommendations of teachers who used this curriculum last year, the unit on rhyme has been revised as follows: There is more detailed explanation of the concepts for the teacher's use; the lessons have been re-structured to provide a more careful sequential build-up of the concepts; additional activities have been suggested to help the teacher avoid having to spend too much time lecturing in front of the class; the readiness material has been moved into a more logical relationship with the suggested questions and activities.

Some Suggestions:

1. There is nothing sacred about the order in which the lessons in this unit are presented. Some of last year's teachers indicated that their students were so familiar with end rhyme that their interest was difficult to hold; they suggested starting with a more challenging concept like off-rhyme and then going back. If such a situation develops or seems likely to develop in your class, shift the material around to suit your own needs. The curriculum is designed to be flexible.

2. Numbers of last year's teachers reported that their children wanted to see the poems, not just hear them. So if you have the time and facilities, try (1) putting dittoed copies of the poems in the students' hands; (2) writing the poems on the board or on large pieces of cardboard or paper; or (3) projecting the poems overhead.

3. The concepts treated in this unit can be found in many other poems besides the ones treated here. If these selections are unsatisfactory for some reason, do not hesitate to make any suitable substitutions you prefer.

4. Many of the suggested activities are adaptable to small-group situations. If your class works better in small groups, feel free to conduct the activities this way even when there is no specific recommendation to that effect in the lesson itself.

RHYME

End Rhyme:	The rhyming of words at the end of lines of poetry, as distinguished from internal rhyme.
Masculine Rhyme:	Rhyme in which the accent falls on the final syllable. (retáin - sustáin).
Feminine Rhyme:	Rhyme in which the accent does not fall on the final syllable. (línger - fínger).
Internal Rhyme:	The rhyming of a word in the middle of a line with a word at the end. ("Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee").
Off-Rhyme:	Also called slant rhyme, or more accurately, near rhyme. The approximate rhyme of two words. (groaned - ground; gate - mat). A frequent occurrence in the lyrics of popular songs.

INTRODUCTION

In spite of the great increase of free verse in the 20th Century, it is still possible to state that the two most fundamental characteristics of poetry are rhyme and rhythm. Ask the mythical "man in the street" to define poetry, and part of his definition will include a recognition of rhyme. Certainly the average elementary school student will mention it as one of poetry's distinctive characteristics. It is also the poetic device which children consciously--and indeed unconsciously--experiment with and use almost from the time they can prattle. "One, two, button my . . . ?" says the mother; "Shoe!" screams the three-year-old in delight. And on it goes through the years, the use of rhyme for experiment with words, for gibes and number games on the playground, for variations on a TV jingle, for mnemonics.

Why this delight in rhyme and rhyme's more subtle relation, rhythm? The answer is basically easy: one of man's apparently fundamental sources of esthetic pleasure is repetition, and rhyme is the repetition of sounds, while rhythm is the repetition of accentual patterns or beats. We like rhyme (let us leave rhythm, which is more complicated, for a later time) because it pleases our ear, because we enjoy the repetition of sound. And it is an instinctive delight, not an acquired taste like poetry or truffles. In introducing children to the study of poetry, it is a good idea to begin with something they already know and use and like. Poetry has been defined as "playing with words," and that is as good a definition as any. One of the simplest and most obvious ways of playing with words is playing with the sounds of words. Encourage your students to play with words.

To turn to the added dimension this curriculum hopes to encourage, let us make some further remarks about rhyme. In the first place, the rhymes in a fresh and original poem should surprise us a little. Once we pass the nursery rhyme stage, we tend to get easily bored when a poem's rhymes are so dull and clunking that we can predict the very word the writer will use to close a rhyme. Popular songs are often predictable in this way--moon leads to June, charms to arms, above to love, and so on. (You might have your students bring some popular songs to class for discussion of the relative freshness of their rhymes.) Though the following verses may not qualify as "great poetry", they do give the reader a certain amusement because their rhymes are unexpected:

Julius Caesar,
The Roman geezer,
Squashed his wife with a lemon squeezer.

In reply
She cried, "Oh my!"
And put out his eye with a silver tweezer.

But of course, rhyme also serves as more than a pleasure-giving ornament to poetry. It helps, through the repetition of the sounds of key words, to aid in our remembering and understanding the poet's development of his ideas. In the hands of a skillful versifier, rhyme can be used for a variety of effects--tension, emphasis, suggestion, the linking of key concepts, and so forth. Further, it helps writers give a sense of unity (another of man's basic pleasures) to their poems.

Technically, rhyme is easy. It is one of the poetic devices which can be described with complete objectivity, and easily identified. Since one of the axioms of this curriculum is that children enjoy learning to name things and identify them, you may find them willing to learn the following terminology--no great end in itself, but the beginning of their ability to understand and talk about what goes on in literature.

Ordinarily, when we say that two words "rhyme," we are simply asserting that they somehow "sound the same." Trying to define more precisely the nature of this similarity, we can say that a rhyme occurs when the vowel sounds in the accented syllables of the words are identical (or similar), and when the consonant sounds (if any) that follow are likewise identical: choice--voice, bigger--trigger, tray--sleigh, prairie schooner--piano tuner. The last two sets of words show that rhyme depends on sound similarity rather than on spelling.

The above definition of rhyme is for you, not your students. For them the statement that two rhyming words "sound alike" will probably be technical enough. Nevertheless, they might learn to recognize the following important kinds of rhyme.

There are two main types of rhyme:

Masculine rhyme: the rhyming of one syllable words, or of the stressed last syllable in words of more than one syllable: fake-break; bereáve-conceíve.

Feminine rhyme: a stressed rhyming syllable followed by one or more unstressed syllables identical in sound: shoulder--bolder, sinister--minister. Feminine rhymes usually make a poem seem lighter in tone, but they occur in serious contexts too. An easy way to differentiate feminine from masculine rhyme is to remember that a rhyme is always feminine when the last syllable in the rhyming pairs is unaccented.

Rhymes can occur primarily in two places. End rhyme is the rhyming of words at the ends of two or more lines. Internal rhyme is the rhyming of a word in the middle of a line with a word at the end--("Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee")--or with another word in the same line--("I'm a lean dog, a keen dog, a wild dog, and lone").

Most of your students will have little trouble grasping the concepts of masculine-feminine rhyme and end-internal rhyme. With a specially interested or gifted group (or with sixth graders), you may want to go on to one of the more subtle types of rhyme employed by poets: off-rhyme (also called half-rhyme or slant-rhyme), which is the use of similar vowel and consonant sounds in words which are near- or approximate- but not true rhymes: river--ever, flush--flash. This kind of rhyme is a frequent device in popular songs, which we have already said are a good place to go for meaningful discussions of rhymes. Since children differ greatly in verbal ability, some of your students may find it hard to identify and discuss off-rhyme. If your class does not respond to the concept, it is best to go on to something else.

A note on alliteration. While not strictly rhyme, alliteration, or the repetition of the sounds of the beginnings of words, is a standard device, and one frequently employed by children ("Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers"). We have noted it when it occurs in the selections in this curriculum, and you will want to point out this device to your classes.

Lesson 1: END RHYME--MASCULINE

(End-rhyme: The rhyming of words at the end of lines of poetry, as distinguished from internal rhyme.)

(Masculine rhyme: Rhyme in which the accent falls in the final syllable--retain-sustain)

Purpose: To enable students to identify end rhyme and discuss it in terms of freshness and originality.

Selections: "The Duck," by Ogden Nash, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, p. 16.

"The Eel," by Ogden Nash, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, p. 16.

"Crows," by David McCord, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, p. 25.

"Oz.," by Eve Merriam, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, p. 93.

Analysis:

"The Eel," "The Duck," and "Crows" are all examples of end rhyme that is masculine. "The Eel" and "The Duck" are written by a prolific master of contrived and silly rhymes, Ogden Nash. The effect of these poems and many of his others is humorous because of the way he recklessly forces words to rhyme. (See the final lines of both poems.)

"Crows" is a descriptive poem, very simply told, whose subject is simple too--the different impressions an ordinary creature (crows) can make upon a mind (the speaker's) that is in a wandering and reflective mood. Each pair of rhyming lines is a separate statement about some activity of the crows, or some setting or context in which the birds are generally found. Our cumulative response to the poem is a more detailed appreciation for a creature we often fail to notice because it is such a common part of our environment.

Readiness:

"The Eel," "The Duck"

1. Have you ever eaten an eel? Would you like to?

2. Have you ever seen a duck suddenly put his head under water to get a bite of food? What happens to his "other end"?

"Crows"

1. Have you ever seen a crow? If you have, did it seem different in any way from other birds you know?

2. Have you ever sat down in your back yard or in a park and spent some time just watching the birds play? What kinds of things did they do? How did they sound?

3. Have you ever seen a disagreement or "fight" between different kinds of birds? What happened?

Suggested Questions:

1. What is rhyme? What words rhyme in "The Eel" and "The Duck"? Where in the lines are these words found?

2. What sound is in all three lines of "The Eel?"

3. Is "they feels" good English? Why do you think the poet said it? (To enforce the rhyme pattern of the poem.)

4. What is funny about the eel and the duck? Why do you think Mr. Nash wrote these two poems?

5. Which words in "Crows" rhyme? Where do the rhymes occur?

6. What is unusual about the length of the lines? (It varies.) Why do you think the poet arranged the lines this way? (To emphasize the rhyming words.)

7. The person who wrote this poem starts almost every line with the words "I like." What different things does he like about the crows?

8. What does the word "spilling" remind you of? Do you think it is a good description of the way a group of birds look when they suddenly take off ?

9. What do the crows in the poem "hate"? Do you believe that some kinds of birds "hate" each other? If not, what might be the poet's reason for describing them this way? (The fanciful interpretation he gives to the noise of their sudden agitation--if the "fight" goes on three farms away, he can't be sure that the owls are out.)

10. Are the crows in this poem like any other birds you have watched?

Suggested Activities:

1. Break the class up into small groups. Have the groups recite their favorite nursery rhymes to each other and list the rhyming words. Ask them to decide which are true rhymes and which are not (example: "Peter, Peter, Pumpkin eater/ Had a wife and couldn't keep her.")

2. Examine the rhymes in some familiar popular song. Ask the class which of the rhymes they think are good and which not, and why.

3. Find a picture of an eel to show to the class. Does it look like they expected it to look? (Or have them draw a picture and then show them the one you found for comparison.)

4. Have the class think of as many words as they can that rhyme with "eel" or "eels." List the words on the board. Have the class make up brief poems of their own about eels, with the same rhyme scheme as the Nash poem (i.e., three rhyming lines). Have them read their poems to each other.

5. Make up a silly poem like "The Duck" in which you have to change some words in order to make them rhyme.

6. Ask the class what other stories or poems they know about crows. Discuss how they compare with the McCord poem (example: fables like "The Fox and the Crow").

7. Have the class write, or tell, what they like or do not like about crows (or some other familiar bird).

Additional Poems:

"Oz." by Eve Merriam

Much of the pleasure of this poem results from the unusually frequent occurrence of rhyming words in a brief space. Since some of your students will undoubtedly notice that a few of the words rhyming with "ounce" come in the middle of the line rather than at the end, you might take the opportunity to mention internal rhyme, a concept which receives fuller treatment in the lesson after next. Also discuss with them the reasons for using such a coinage as "chounce."

Readiness:

1. (Put the poem's title on the board--be sure you include the " .")

2. This is the title of a poem. What do you think the poem is about?

Suggested Questions:

1. Find all the words in this poem that rhyme with "ounce" and list them on the board. How many other words can you think of that rhyme with "ounce"?

2. Why do you think the poet calls the kitten a "jungle ounce"?

3. Have you ever seen the word "chounce" before? What word does the poet really mean? Why do you think the poet used "chounce" instead?

Suggested Activities:

1. How many things can you think of that weigh around an ounce?

2. Draw a picture showing what a kitten looks like when it is ready to pounce.

Lesson 2: END RHYME--MASCULINE AND FEMININE

(Feminine rhyme: Rhymes in which the accent does not fall on the final syllable--linger-finger.)

Purpose: To enable students to distinguish feminine from masculine rhyme.

Selections: "Nursery Rhyme for the Tender-Hearted," by Christopher Morley, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, pages 128-129.

"Advice to Travelers," by Walker Gibson, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 42.

"Reflections Dental," by Phyllis McGinley, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 52.

"Ancient History," by Arthur Guiterman, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 63.

"Wild Goose," by Curtis Heath, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 123.

Analysis:

Before discussing the Morley poem, which contains both masculine and feminine end rhyme, you might want to continue the work with nursery rhymes begun in the first lesson. Call attention to the concept of feminine rhyme by having your students reexamine the nursery rhymes they used in lesson one and then pointing out which of the rhymes are feminine (how about "Little Miss Muffet"?). Having the class thump out the accent pattern of the poems should illustrate the point that feminine rhymes always conclude with an unaccented syllable.

There is nothing particularly difficult about the point of Morley's poem--it is expressed in the last stanza, where the poet, after musing on the nocturnal activities of the cockroach, admits that he and the roach "are brothers" because they both raid the kitchen at night. The first stanza imitates the nursery rhyme "Twinkle, twinkle little star"; some of your more verbally sensitive students may catch this resemblance. If they do, ask them why the poet might have imitated a poem about a star when talking about such a strange subject as a cockroach--in other words, there is a question of tone here that your students might catch. Vocabulary may need a little extra explanation in this poem. (secrete--to deposit or conceal in a hiding place; vermin--insects or repulsive forms of small animal life.)

Readiness:

1. (Have the title read, or put on the board.)
2. Who are nursery rhymes written for?

3. What are tender hearted people?

4. If you saw a cockroach on your kitchen floor, what would you do to it? Are you tender hearted?

Suggested Questions:

1. What is the difference between masculine and feminine rhyme? How many of the rhymes in this poem are feminine? (Be sure they see the whisk its--biscuits rhyme.)

2. Do the feminine rhymes seem humorous or funny to you? Why or why not? (The exact reasons for the humorous effect of feminine rhyme are a matter of linguistic speculation, but it might be interesting to see what responses the students come up with.)

3. Where does the cockroach apparently spend his time when he is not prowling the darkened kitchen? Where does the poem tell you this?

4. What does the poet mean when he says that he and the cockroach "are brothers"?

5. How do you think the poet feels about the cockroach? Does it disgust him or make him sick? (Direct their attention once again to the title.)

Suggested Activities:

1. Break the class up into groups and direct each group to think of as many words as possible that rhyme with the feminine rhymes in the Morley poem (vermin, biscuits, butter). Have them think of some other words whose accents fall on the first syllable and then find rhymes for them. (examples: needle, chitter, flower, squeaking, nation.) You might even suggest some three syllable possibilities, which would produce humorous results: platypus, tenderly, withering, oxygen. Remember that a phrase as well as a word can complete a feminine rhyme--this should make it easier as well as more fun to come up with rhymes.

Example: "The Hippopotamus," by Hilaire Belloc, from Cautionary Verses. New York: Random House, 1939.

2. Ask the class members to tell of any encounters they (or their mothers!) have had with cockroaches. Compare the attitudes presented in the discussion with the attitude of the speaker in the poem.

3. Read sections of "Archy and Mehitabel" (Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, p. 41) to the class for comparison with the Morley poem. ("Archy and Mehitabel" is a humorous poem by Don Marquis in which Archy, a cockroach, narrates his adventures with the cat Mehitabel. Like the Morley poem, it presents a "sympathetic" portrait of an object generally thought of as odious.)

4. Have the students draw a picture of the cockroach as they visualize him in this poem (reclining on the cheese, etc.).

5. There are many interesting and unusual facts about cockroaches (e.g., they are a very ancient kind of insect and were alive in their present form when dinosaurs roamed the earth; they can live for amazingly long periods without food; they are nearly immune to the effects of atomic radiation). Do some research yourself, or have your students find the information, and prepare a bulletin board on the subject of cockroaches.

Additional Poems:

"Advice to Travelers"

"Advice to Travelers" has good examples of both masculine and feminine end rhyme.

The poet uses a humorous situation (the burro eating his shipping ticket and staying unclaimed in a warehouse) to illustrate a serious idea ("Don't keep things locked up inside--say who you are and where you're going"). To point out how the moral is both humorous in the context of the poem and serious in the context of a human life, you might ask first how the moral is borne out by the burro; second, what the moral suggests a person would do as he "travels" through his life; third, what might happen if a person "swallowed his ticket," if he never spoke or thought about who he was or where he was headed.

The poet uses informal diction ("He waited till he like to died," "Don't keep things locked up inside," "where you're going") to help create a light tone. He apparently feels that the serious moral will have more impact if administered humorously. You may have found this to be the case in the classroom at times. In order to get at this idea with your students you might ask why the poet chooses to use humor in this poem.

Readiness:

1. (Write on the blackboard the statement: "Say who you are and where you're going.")

2. When is this (the statement) good advice to give to someone?

Suggested Questions:

1. What words rhyme in "Advice to Travelers"? Where do the accents fall in the different pairs of rhyming words?

2. In "Advice to Travelers" the poet says "like to died" instead of "almost died." Can you think of any reason why he uses this expression rather than the other one?

3. What happens to the burro and why?

4. The burro is a traveler. The poem is called "Advice to Travelers." Who are the travelers the poet is advising? Where are they traveling?

"Reflections Dental"

"Ancient History"

"Wild Goose"

All of these poems have good examples of both masculine and feminine rhyme. They should be presented primarily to reinforce the rhyme concept and not so much for interpretation. The readiness questions are generally adequate to get the class thinking about the meaning of the poem.

For each poem, have the students list the masculine and feminine rhymes and discuss them. Are they clever? Stale? Do they seem to fit the ideas the poet is working with? And so on.

Readiness, Questions, Activities:

"Reflections Dental"

1. Vocabulary: ventriloquist
M. C.
teem
orthodontist
incisor

2. (Not too many children will understand the concept of capped teeth. Understanding of the poem is rather dependent on the knowledge of capped teeth and that many entertainers have capped teeth. You might start by asking the children if they have ever seen a T. V. or movie star with bad teeth. Then see where your next questions should go from there.)

3. Show the class the picture accompanying this poem and see what kind of discussion it provokes.

4. Have the students write or tell of some experience they or members of their families have had with toothaches, "tooth fairies," dentists, or some related subject.

"Ancient History"

The key to the poet's attitude is found in the final stanza. If your class is interested in history or world affairs, you might ask them why Guiterman describes the world situation as a "fuss."

1. Vocabulary: abdomen
conniption
scarabs
Vandals (Note capitalization. Good chance for a lesson in etymology.)
gout
versions
Medes
chronic

2. (Let the pupils tell you how they really feel about history--if you are brave enough to do it.)

3. Do you think all adults enjoyed learning history?

4. Is it fair to say that all the problems we have in the world today were caused by the people who lived long ago?

"Wild Goose"

1. Vocabulary: migration
align
bayou

2. Where do geese go in the winter? Would you like to go there too?

3. There's an old saying: silly as a goose. Why might people think geese are silly? Do you think they're silly?

4. Is the goose in this poem silly?

Lesson 3: INTERNAL RHYME

(Internal Rhyme: The rhyming of a word in the middle of the line with one at the end--"Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee"--or with other words in the same line).

Purpose: **To enable students to identify internal rhyme.**

Selections: "The Lone Dog," by Irene McLeod (text follows)

"Walloping Window-blind," by Charles E. Carryl, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, p. 17.

"The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert W. Service (text follows)

Selected nursery rhymes (text follows)

THE LONE DOG

I'm a lean dog, a keen dog, a wild dog,
and lone:
I'm a rough dog, a tough dog, hunting
on my own;
I'm a bad dog, a mad dog, teasing silly
sheep;
I love to sit and bay the moon, to keep
fat souls from sleep.

I'll never be a lap dog, licking dirty
feet,
A sleek dog, a meek dog, cringing for
my meat,
Not for me the fireside, the well-filled
plate,
But shut door and sharp stone, and cuff
and kick and hate.

Not for me the other dogs, running by
my side,
Some have run a short while, but none of
them would bide.
O mine is still the lone trail, the
hard trail, the best,
Wide wind, and wild stars, and hunger of
the quest!

--Irene McLeod

Analysis: Vocabulary: bide (stay)

You might want to begin this lesson by reading or referring to the Aesop fable, "The Dog and the Wolf," in which a similar disdain for the safe and easy life is expressed. The poem uses the basic technique of the fable, with which many of your students should be familiar: the use of animals to express typically human attitudes and values. The ideal of personal freedom above all other considerations should appeal particularly to the boys in your class.

The "lone dog" loves freedom and is not willing to trade it for a "well-filled plate" and other creature comforts, just as Aesop's wolf rejects the mark of the collar. The dog knows that life will not be easy, but for him the "lone trail" and "the wild stars" are worth the price he must pay. The phrases "licking dirty feet" and "cringing for my meat" express his contempt for the safe life of the tame pet--again an attitude that can be translated to human attitudes.

Thematic relationships are an important part of the learning process. The connection with the Aesop fable is obvious. For a variation of the wild and free theme, and a moderately successful attempt to have both the wild freedom and the tame comfort, you may wish to compare this poem with Kipling's "The Cat Who Walked By Himself," one of the narrative selections in this year's work.

The use of the internal rhymes in the poem should be obvious to your class. By using rhyming pairs such as "lean - keen," "rough - tough," etc., the author provides a strong rhyming pattern which appeals to children. The use of the internal rhymes, particularly as close together as these are in the line, contributes a sense of emphasis, a piling-up of attributes supporting the central statement.

Reading Readiness:

"The Lone Dog"

1. Vocabulary" keen (alert); cringing, quest

2. Would you rather work and play with other people, or would you rather be alone? Why?

3. Why do you suppose some people like to be alone?

Suggested Questions:

1. Underline all the words that rhyme. Where do you find some of the rhymes? What do you think such rhymes might be called? (Introduce internal rhyme; review the kinds and locations of rhymes.)

2. What are some of the things the "Lone Dog" wants to do? What does he say he will never do? (You may want to make two lists on the board.)

3. Which kind of dog do you admire most? Why? Which dog do you think the author admires? Why do you think so?

4. Which kind of life would you rather lead? Why?

Suggested Activities:

1. Try to set the words of the poem to music. Sing or play it to the class, or record your song and play the recording to the class.

2. What dogs might have run along with the lone dog, and then left him? Why might the dogs have left him? What did the lone dog think when they left? Write a story about the lone dog losing a friend.

3. If you could be free to do whatever you wanted, what would you do? After you have listed what you would do, go back over your list and imagine what would happen if you did each thing.

4. Write a poem using internal rhyme.

5. What other poems can you think of that have internal rhyme? (Here you can use nursery rhymes again. If the class has trouble coming up with any, you can begin with those below.)

Mistress Mary, quite contrary
How does your garden grow?
With cockle shells and silver bells
And pretty maids all in a row.

Little Bo-peep has lost her sheep
And doesn't know where to find them:
Leave them alone;* and they'll come home,*
Wagging their tails behind them.

One, two, buckle my shoe;
Three, four, shut the door;
Five, six, pick up sticks;
Seven, eight, lay them straight;
Nine, ten, big fat hen;
Eleven, twelve, dig and delve;
Thirteen, fourteen;* maids a-courting;*
Fifteen, sixteen;* maids a-kissing;*
Seventeen, eighteen;* maids a-waiting;*
Nineteen, twenty;* my stomach's empty.*

Goosey, goosey, gander,* where do you wander*?
Up stairs and down stairs, and in my lady's chamber*
There I met an old man that would not say his prayers,
I took him by his hind legs and threw him down stairs.

(Notice the asterisked words, which are examples of off-rhyme; they may be used to introduce that concept, which is the subject of the next lesson.)

Additional Poems:

"Walloping Window-blind," by Charles E. Carryl

"The Cremation of Sam McGee," by Robert W. Service

THE CREMATION OF SAM MCGEE

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee, where
the cotton blooms and blows.
Why he left his home in the South to roam
'round the Pole, God only knows.
He was always cold, but the land of gold
seemed to hold him like a spell;
Though he'd often say in his homely way
that he'd sooner live in hell.

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way
over the Dawson trail.
Talk of your cold! through the parka's
fold it stabbed like a driven nail.
If our eyes we'd close, then the lashes
froze till sometimes we couldn't see;
It wasn't much fun, but the only one to
whimper was Sam McGee.

And that very night, as we lay packed in
our robes beneath the snow,
And the dogs were fed, and the stars o'er-
head were dancing heel and toe,
He turned to me, and "Cap," says he, "I'll
cash in this trip, I guess;
And if I do, I'm asking that you won't
refuse my last request."

Well, he seemed so low that I couldn't say
no; then he says with a sort of moan:
"It's the cursed cold, and it's got right
hold till I'm chilled clean through to
the bone.
Yet 'taint being dead--it's my awful dread
of the icy grave that pains;
So I want you to swear that, foul or fair,
you'll cremate my last remains."

A pal's last need is a thing to heed, so I
swore I would not fail;
And we started on at the streak of dawn;
but God! he looked ghastly pale.
He crouched on the sleigh, and he raved
all day of his home in Tennessee;
And before nightfall a corpse was all that
was left of Sam McGee.

There wasn't a breath in that land of death,
and I hurried, horror-driven,
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get
rid, because of a promise given;
It was lashed to the sleigh, and it seem-
ed to say: "You may tax your brawn and
brains,

But you promised true, and it's up to you
to cremate those last remains."

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid, and
the trail has its own stern code.
In the days to come, though my lips were
dumb, in my heart how I cursed that load.
In the long, long night, by the lone fire-
light, while the huskies, round in a ring,
Howled out their woes to the homeless snows--
O God! how I loathed the thing.

And every day that quiet clay seemed to
heavy and heavier grow;
And on I went, though the dogs were spent
and the grub was getting low;
The trail was bad, and I felt half mad,
but I swore I would not give in;
And I'd often sing to the hateful thing,
and it hearkened with a grin.

Till I came to the marge of Lake Leborge,
and a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice, but I saw in a
trice it was called the "Alice May."
And I looked at it, and I thought a bit,
and I looked at my frozen chum;
Then "Here," said I, with a sudden cry,
"Is my cre-ma-tor-eum."

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor,
and I lit the boiler fire;
Some coal I found that was lying around,
and I heaped the fuel higher;

The flames just soared, and the furnace
roared--such a blaze you seldom see;
And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal,
and I stuffed in Sam McGee.

Then I made a hike, for I didn't like to
hear him sizzle so;
And the heavens scowled, and the huskies
howled, and the wind began to blow.
It was icy cold, but the hot sweat rolled
down my cheeks, and I don't know why;
And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak
went streaking down the sky.

I do not know how long in the snow I
wrestled with grisly fear;
But the stars came out and they danced
about ere again I ventured near;
I was sick with dread, but I bravely said:
"I'll just take a peep inside.
I guess he's cooked, and it's time I
looked";...then the door I opened wide.

And there sat Sam, looking cool and calm,
in the heart of the furnace roar;
And he wore a smile you could see a mile,
and he said: "Please close that door.
It's fine in here, but I greatly fear
you'll let in the cold and storm--
Since I left Plumtree, down in Tennessee,
it's the first time I've been warm."

There are strange things done in the mid-
night sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights
But the queerest they ever did see
Was the night by the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.

--Robert Service

Reading Readiness:

"Walloping Window-blind"

1. What happens to window blinds when the wind blows? Are they anything like sails of ships?

2. What kinds of games or imaginary play could a young child make up with a "walloping window blind"?

3. (Please teach that boatswain is pronounced bo'sn.)

"The Cremation of Sam McGee"

1. Vocabulary: moil (toil, work)
cremation
marge (edge)
spent (exhausted, tired out)
cash in (to die)
derelict (ship)
grisly (gruesome)

2. (Set the scene in the Klondike gold rush. That will probably be all you need to do.)

Lesson 4: OFF-RHYME

(Off-rhyme: The approximate rhyme of two words--gate-mat; groaned-ground)

Purpose: To enable students to identify and work with off-rhyme.

Selections: "There Was a Little Man" (text below)

"Counting-Out Rhyme," by Edna St. Vincent Millay, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 99.

"John Henry" reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, pages 46-48.

There was a little man,
And he had a little gun,
And his bullets were made of lead, lead, lead.
He went to a brook,
And fired at a duck,
And shot it through the head, head, head.

He carried it home,
To his old wife Joan
And bid her a fire for to make, make, make.
To roast the little duck,
He'd shot in the brook,
And he'd go and fetch her the drake, drake, drake.

The drake was a-swimming,
With his curly tail;
The little man made it his mark, mark, mark!
He shot off his gun,
But he fired too soon,
And the drake flew away with a quack, quack, quack.

Analysis:

This simple poem offers a good introduction to the concept of off-rhyme. A main reason is its stanza form. Looking down the page at the poem, you can see the heavy emphasis created in lines 3 and 6 of each stanza by their greater length and their repetition of key words. In the first two stanzas, lines 3 and 6 are true rhymes (lead-head, make-drake), a fact which makes more noticeable the off-rhyme in the corresponding position in stanza three (mark-quack).

There is a good deal of off-rhyme in this poem. The off-rhyme brook-duck in lines 4 and 5 of stanza one is cleverly turned around in stanza two. The corresponding lines in stanza three give us gun-soon,

and the opening lines of the first two stanzas contain, respectively, the off-rhymes man-gun and home-Joan.

The rhyme pattern of the entire poem is more carefully constructed than it first appears to be. This is perhaps surprising when we remember that the poem comes directly out of English oral tradition (it was a favorite children's poem). The story is of course obvious; the poem pleases almost wholly by the harmony of its sounds.

Readiness:

1. Have you ever gone duck hunting? What was it like?

2. What is the word for a "male duck"? (drake)

Suggested Questions:

1. Which words in this poem rhyme? List them on the board.

2. Are there some words in this poem that "almost" rhyme? What are they? (Introduce and define off-rhyme.)

3. In the first two stanzas, the last line rhymes with one of the earlier lines. Which one? (Line 3.) Does the last line of stanza three rhyme with its third line? (No.) What sound would have to be used in line 6 of stanza three to make it rhyme with line 3? (ark.)

4. Why do you suppose the little man went back to shoot the drake after shooting the first duck? (Since ducks swim in mated pairs, the little man might have thought he was doing the drake a kindness. Also, of course, he might have been extra hungry!)

5. Do you like the little man in this poem? Why or why not?

Suggested Activities:

1. Have the students do the following exercise: take the two off-rhymes from stanza one of "There Was a Little Man" and write them widely spaced across a piece of paper (or you can write them on the board) as follows:

List A		List B	
man	gun	brook	duck

Now have the students list under the first word in each column all the words they can think of that rhyme with it. In a short time, the list should look something like this:

List A		List B	
man	gun	brook	duck
ran	run	cook	cluck
fan	fun	book	buck
Dan	done	shook	truck
tan	ton	nook	luck
pan	sun	took	stuck

Now tell the students to try writing brief poems in which they use some true rhymes and some of the off-rhymes from the paired lists they have made. Examples:

My mother told me
Don't stand by the fan
It won't be any fun
For cold you will be.

I can't read a book
I really am a cluck
But if I try very hard
I'll get a good report card.

I went to find my brother Dan
I found him in the shower.
And just as soon as Dan was done
We went to pick some flowers.

2. Have your students prepare their own collection of poems with examples of <u>each</u> type of rhyme they have studied. Ask them to label the poems accordingly.

<u>Additional Poems:</u>

"Counting-Out Rhyme"

<u>Readiness:</u>

Remember this rhyme from the previous unit:

One, two, buckle my shoe;
Three, four, shut the door;
Five, six, pick up sticks;
Seven, eight, lay them straight;
Nine, ten, big fat hen. (etc.)

This is a rhyme that you might use in picking partners for a game; it's called a count-out rhyme. Really, it doesn't make a lot of sense, because it isn't supposed to.

"Counting Out Rhyme" by Edna Millay is another poem of the same sort that you could use in the same way, but it has some soft and beautiful sounds that make it pleasant to read just for itself. It also has some interesting descriptions. See if you can pick out the off-rhymes in this poem.

"John Henry"

The off-rhymes are harder to find here--they occur in lines 2 and 5 of stanzas 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9.

Readiness:

(In the old days when a tunnel needed to be made through a hill, the digging was done by hand. While a man called a "shaker" held a six-foot-long drill-rod, another man steadily hit the drill with a sledge hammer. Other men carried away the rocks that were broken up by the "steel driving man." Only the biggest and strongest men could work with the sledge hammer, as you might well imagine. Then when the steam-driven drill was invented--something like a jackhammer, which is the noisy thing workmen use to break up sidewalks, --you can imagine what the proud "steel driving men" thought of it. This ballad tells of a race between a man and a machine.)

ED 075849

RHYME SCHEME; STANZA

REVISED VERSION, FOR TRYOUT 1971-72

In response to suggestions from teachers who used the original version of the curriculum last year, the Rhyme Scheme; Stanza unit has been revised as follows: The readiness sections have been moved into more logical relationship with the suggested questions and activities; selections have been added or shifted to a different emphasis within lessons; there is more analysis of selections; the student activities sections have been significantly expanded.

In addition, the free verse lessons have been re-organized so that more familiar types such as haiku and cinquain are treated first. Throughout these lessons, more material has been added in answer to your requests, but remember that such stanza forms as limericks, cinquain, and haiku are widely available in children's literature books. Because of copyright restrictions, we cannot always include as much of this modern material as we would like, so your own initiative is very important. Remember too that the chief value of this curriculum is in its approach to the material, not in the actual selections it includes.

A note about organization: Some of last year's pilot teachers appeared confused about the organization of the lessons on the quatrain; they wondered why the ballad stanza lesson came between the ones on the quatrain, and the quatrain as part of a larger unit. The explanation is that the ballad stanza is thought of primarily as a quatrain put to a somewhat specialized use. Thus it seems logical to deal with the quatrain as a ballad stanza before dealing with the quatrain as part of a larger unit, where it loses its stanzaic distinctness. The introductions to the three lessons in question have been re-written to make this sequence more clear.

INTRODUCTION

It would have been possible to include a discussion of rhyme scheme and stanza patterns in the unit on rhyme, but we have thought it better to make this a separate chapter, for a couple of reasons. The first is that otherwise the combined chapter would have been of a disproportionate length.

The second, and far more important reason, involves the important implications for the study of poetry of what, at this stage, will be a fairly simple exercise. For the organization of poetry into stanzaic patterns is merely the most obvious and one of the most elementary manifestations of a very complex and significant idea--the idea of organization, pattern, or, as it is most generally called, form.

The artist has some perception of a significant pattern or form in the raw mass of human experience. Using his selected medium--in the poet's case, words--he imposes on experience the pattern he has perceived. And it is this pattern in which the artist shapes experience that we, the audience, perceive and to which we respond. Poetry--all art--is essentially shaped or patterned or formed experience, and any form-giving device the artist uses becomes important for our consideration.

It is not our intention to ask elementary school children to embark on a philosophical and psychological discussion of the importance of form as an expression of man's instinctive need to bring order out of chaos. It is, however, worthwhile to invite them to learn some of the standard patterns that poets use to give form to their work. This is a first step in a series that will take them along the way to being intelligent and perceptive readers. In later grades, when they study more sophisticated literary forms, they will be able to recognize that writers use established forms and variations on them as ways of controlling tone and meaning. They will also be studying the same sort of thing in reading narrative patterns. So the beginning is important.

The beginning, like many beginnings, is fairly simple and to a large extent mechanical. The description of a stanza of poetry is a combination of rhyme scheme and scansion. Your class should be familiar with such ideas as end rhyme and off rhyme, and should have no trouble working out the rhyme scheme of the simple stanza patterns treated here. Rhyme scheme deals only with end rhymes, and consists simply of giving the same letter value to similar rhymes. Thus, the following lines may be said to have a rhyme scheme of abab:

They are better than stars or water	a
Better than voices of winds that sing,	b
Better than any man's fair daughter,	a
Your green glass beads on a silver ring.	b

Scansion, which means working out the metrical pattern of a line by marking its accented and unaccented syllables, is a little more difficult, and is treated in a later unit of the curriculum. At this stage, however, you need not expect your class to learn any of the terminology associated with scansion; few of them would be able (or willing) to define, say, the typical ballad stanza as "a quatrain rhyming abcb, with alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter." But by using the simple method of pounding out the accents of words as the lines are read aloud, they should be able in most cases to determine the number of feet (metrical units) in a line, and thus understand the concept of poetic rhythm without the terminology. At least, they should be able to distinguish the quatrain from the couplet and recognize that the poet is subjecting himself to the constraints of a required form.

The poems that follow illustrate some of the most common stanzaic forms. It is hoped that your students will learn the elementary terminology involved in describing these forms.

Lesson 1: THE COUPLET

(Couplet: Two successive rhyming lines, usually of the same meter and length.)

Purpose: To illustrate the use of the couplet as a stanza form.

Selections: "The Bat," by Theodore Roethke, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 35.

"Why Nobody Pets the Lion at the Zoo," by John Ciardi, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 33.

"The Pheasant," by Robert P. Tristram Coffin, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 120.

Analysis: "The Bat"

The rhymed couplet has a long and honorable history, going back in English poetry at least to Chaucer. It is a very flexible form, and can be adapted to any number of effects. The couplet may be defined as two successive lines with the same end rhyme and with the same metrical length. Though it usually appears as the basic structural unit in long narrative poems, the couplet can be used as an individual stanza form, as in the poem that follows. It is also frequently found as the concluding part of a stanza with a different rhyme scheme--the similarity of the couplet rhymes providing an effect of finality or rounding-off.

In "The Bat," Theodore Roethke uses the closed couplet, in which each couplet forms a complete grammatical sense-unit (except the second, which forms two units). When couplets are used for narrative poetry, one finds a greater number of run-on lines, in which the sense and the grammatical structure run on into the next couplet.

Roethke uses his couplets to make a series of separate descriptive statements about the bat. The statements are unified by two sets of comparisons: (1) similarities the poet sees between the bat and the mouse, and (2) those he sees between the bat and humans. The comparisons are introduced in the opening two lines, expanded in the intermediate couplets, and unified into a rich metaphor in the closing couplet.

The first couplet states the dual comparison as a simple metaphor: the bat is "cousin to the mouse." (The "human" aspect of the comparison lies in the use of the word "cousin," normally descriptive of family relationships among humans, to indicate the animals' biological similarity.) Though the poet is mainly concerned with the bat's "mouseness," in the first two couplets, his diction here also continues to suggest the bat's "humanness": he has "fingers" and a "pulse beat"; he is referred to as a "he" rather than an "it."

The third stanza serves as kind of pivot in the poem: it is centrally located, and it also moves from the bat's daytime activities to his nocturnal habits, which are both more familiar to us and more fearful. The poem mentions this fear for the first time in the fourth couplet and explains it in the closing lines. We are afraid of the bat, he seems to say, because there is something about an animal with a human face that defies our belief that nature makes neat separations, and disturbs our sense of being superior among natural creatures.

The final couplet unifies the poem by pulling the bat-mouse and bat-human comparisons together into a single complex metaphor. A comparison of the opening and closing metaphors shows that the poet has arrived at a full statement of the partial concepts he began with. You might point out that this statement-expansion-restatement method is one of the most common ways a poet has of giving form to a thought.

Readiness:

"The Bat"

1. Is a bat an animal or bird?

2. What animal does he resemble?

3. Is there anything about a bat that resembles a human?

Suggested Questions:

1. Let's do some exploring within this poem to discover the special tool the poet has used in writing it. How many lines are there in each stanza? How has the poet used rhyme in each stanza? Let's diagram the rhyme scheme of the poem --(Introduce the necessary terminology--diagram the rhyme scheme aa bb cc etc.)

2. What is the rhythm pattern of the poem? Do all the lines have the same rhythm? --(If your class isn't used to elementary scansion you may not want to pursue this. The lines are mainly composed of five stresses, and can roughly be called iambic pentameter. At least have the class try to beat out the rhythm of the lines as they are read aloud.)

3. There is a special name given to a stanza that has two lines with the same rhyme scheme and the same general meter. Does any one know it? --(Introduce the term couplet and discuss. Why call it a couplet? A suitable name? Elicit a definition of the couplet and add it to a classroom bulletin board of poetic tools.)

4. Why do you think people are afraid of bats? What frightening stories have you heard about the things bats do? --(Show the class a picture of a bat to illustrate the closing metaphor of "mouse with wings and a human face." Note especially the facial features. Do they really look human?)

5. Apes and chimps look a lot more "human" than bats. Do we feel the same way about apes as we do about bats? Why or why not?

6. Do you think the poet means to say that we are physically afraid of bats, or is he talking about some other kind of fear?

Suggested Activities:

1. Have someone in the class look up the subject "bats" in an encyclopedia and present a report on their characteristics and habits.

2. The advantage of a closed couplet poem like this one is that you can always insert another in the middle of the poem somewhere. Have your class make a list of bat characteristics Roethke omits (activity #1 can give some hints), and see if they can compose a couplet to stick in the poem somewhere.

3. Select another topic--the "humanness" of some other type of animal, for instance--and have them try collectively or individually to write couplets.

Additional Poems:

"Why Nobody Pets the Lion at the Zoo"

Analysis:

The couplets in this poem are as simple and direct as those in the Roethke poem, and they also have the advantage, for illustrative purposes, of being more regular in rhythm. As you read the poem aloud, ask your class to beat out the accent pattern of the words. They should conclude that each line has four main stresses. (If anyone is interested, you might mention that this stress pattern is called tetrameter.) One danger in a poem as regular as this is that it will be read with too sing-song an effect. Try to avoid this, while at the same time emphasizing the places where a natural accent occurs.

Because of its brevity and neatness, the couplet is often a vehicle for humorous statements in poetry. This certainly is the main thrust of Ciardi's poem, which acknowledges the strength and ferocity of the Lion, but sees him through the fanciful eyes of childhood. Call attention to such

lines as, "And if the Lion bothered Adam, / He should have growled right back at 'im." Why are the lines humorous? (The effect of the neat rhythm and arrangement of the couplet, plus the rounding-off given by the rhyme Adam, at 'im. A good opportunity to review feminine rhyme.)

Readiness:

1. Would you consider petting a lion at the Zoo? Why not?

2. If a lion growled at you, would you growl back?

3. If a lion bit you, would you bite him back?

"The Pheasant"

Analysis:

This is a bird that many of your students may have seen, so before reading the poem, see what they know or have heard about it. An actual classroom experience with the bird would provide the best background possible. A stuffed pheasant or a picture of one might serve to show the beauty of the bird, and thus help the children understand the poet's metaphor, "A living jewel." (A stuffed bird might also suggest something to them about the poet's main point, the cruelty of ending so beautiful a life.)

The poem deals with a simple situation, the shooting of a proud and beautiful natural creature. The couplets in this poem, like those in "The Bat," advance the story in neat, pointed segments. The first describes the bird's beauty at its first appearance; the second and third emphasize its beauty and pride, which are part of each other. Then with the fourth couplet there is a sudden change--the gun thunders, and the rest of the poem contrasts the pheasant's wounded and dying appearance with his beauty and "scorn" of the moment before. You might point out how the poet's overall attitude toward the shooting is forcefully emphasized in the last line by the close juxtaposition of the ideas of life and death that have been dealt with earlier: "He lay in jewelled feathers, dead."

Suggested Questions:

1. What is the stanza form of this poem?

2. Would you say that each couplet is like a little paragraph, telling us some more of the story of the pheasant?

3. How do you think the poet feels about the bird? What words show his attitude? ("living jewel," "scorn," "grace," "hymn")

4. After the pheasant has been shot, his eyes change from being "fierce" to being "wise." What do you think the bird has learned to make him wise? (the cruelty of men, the fact that life must end, and so on)

5. What do you think the poet wishes us to learn from this poem? (respect for living beauty, the cruelty of hunting and killing living things, etc.)

Lesson 2: QUATRAIN

(Quatrain: A four line stanza. In a longer stanza, a group of four lines distinguishable from other quatrains, usually by rhyme scheme.)

Purpose: To introduce the quatrain as a stanza form in poetry.

Selections: "The Puppy," by Robert L. Tyler, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 86.

"There Was a Lady," Anon. (text below)

"For a Dead Kitten," by Sara Henderson Hay, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 92.

"Unsatisfied Yearning," by R. K. Munkittrick, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 85.

"Break, Break, Break," by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (text below)

Analysis: "The Puppy"

Broadly speaking, the quatrain is a four-line stanza with a particular rhyme scheme. The quatrain can exist as a separate stanza in a series, or several quatrains can compose a single stanza or a whole poem. Normally the lines of a quatrain are metrically similar, a special exception being the ballad stanza, a form we will deal with in the next lesson. The rhyme scheme of a quatrain may vary considerably, the one illustrated in "Puppy" (abab) being among the most common.

In the introduction to this chapter we mentioned the relationship between form and idea. Looked at in this way, it is easy to understand the popularity of the quatrain. It is long enough to permit a fairly complex grammatical and conceptual development, and the linking of quatrains in forms like the sonnet allows even further flexibility. But at the same time it is short enough so that the poet can move to a related or progressing thought without getting all tangled in a complicated stanza form. The varieties of rhyme offer further possibilities for adaptation. And finally, since the form is so flexible it is not associated with any particular type of utterance in the way that, say, the limerick is reserved for comic verse or the ode for elevated discourse. It is easy to understand why it is the most common and popular set form in English poetry.

Though it seems on the surface a simple descriptive poem, "Puppy" illustrates how the quatrain form can be used to show progression in thought. In this case, the progression is in the increasing complexity of the visual, auditory, and tactile sensations presented. The poet's obvious intention is to make the reader experience every sensation in the poem from the puppy's point of view. We are wholly "inside" the puppy's body and brain in the first quatrain; the poet uses no introductory phrase such as "the puppy does this or that"; he merely presents the feelings and actions themselves and induces the reader to experience them in the same way the puppy would.

In the second quatrain, the cumulative force of the sensations presented in the first is summed up in the phrase "the backyard world is vast as park." This phrase moves the point of view slightly outward from that of the first quatrain; where the latter made us see and feel the puppy's immediate circle of activity, the second places him in meaningful relation to his larger surroundings. Though we experience the puppy's physical sensations as we did in the first quatrain (the "tickle" of the grass and the "stun" of the water from the sprinkler are the strongest tactile images in the poem), we are simultaneously looking down at him as a tiny object on a large expanse of lawn.

In keeping with its more complex idea, the second quatrain is more subtle in rhyme scheme and rhythm. There are more run-on lines--in fact, the whole quatrain is a single sentence--and the off-rhyme park-are breaks up an otherwise regular rhyme scheme. Though iambic feet occur most often (an iambic foot is an accent unit composed of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, as in today), the poem seems to have no dominant rhythm, a perhaps deliberate device of the poet's to suggest the aimless activity of a puppy. If you wish, point out to your students that most quatrains (other than those in ballads) have a more regular rhythm than these two. This is a good opportunity to make a point about the relationship between form and meaning.

Try to get your class to see how the poet's word choice and compression of detail are especially appropriate to the subject. The poem's final metaphor is particularly worth examination: the "squalls" of sprinkler water become for the puppy "rainbows to the yap yap sun." Why "yap yap sun"? What does the poet gain by compressing an auditory image together with a visual one? (Or, to put it grammatically, by converting an ejaculative expression into an adjective?) Have your class paraphrase the image shown by the phrase to emphasize how much the poet says, and how many words he saves, by the use of this construction. This is a good opportunity to make the point that such compression is a principal difference between the form of poetry and that of prose.

Readiness:

1. If you watched a puppy playing in your back yard, what are some of the things he would play with?

2. Is he pretending to be a fierce animal?

3. What kind of noise does a puppy make when he is excited?

4. How do you think your back yard would look to you if you were a puppy? (Get them to think in terms of their own greatly-reduced size compared to common backyard objects.)

Suggested Questions:

1. How many lines are there in each stanza of this poem? What is the rhyme scheme? Is there any place in the poem where the rhyme scheme is not perfect?

2. Does the second stanza seem harder to read or understand? Why or why not? (Try to direct their attention to the notions raised in the analysis, but if their interest is not engaged, go on to the other questions.)

3. Why would the garden hose seem like a "cobra" to a puppy? Why would a bee seem "snobbish"? (In other words, what visual images is the poet suggesting?)

4. Which stanza seems to contain more words describing how things "feel" to the puppy?

5. When a poet repeats the same letter at the beginnings of words, we call it alliteration. How many examples of alliteration can you find in the poem? Which letter does the poet use most often for alliteration? How often does this letter sound appear at the ends of words in the poem? --(After the class has discovered the dominance of the s sound, you might examine the phrase "stun of sudden sprinkler squalls" to show how sound reinforces meaning--the successive s sounds suggesting the recurring blasts of the sprinkler. This is a fairly advanced notion, so if the students don't get it, drop it.)

6. Does the phrase "yap yap sun" seem unusual to you? What image does it bring to mind? Put the image in your own words. Can you describe the image as briefly as the phrase itself does?

7. Try to imagine you are the puppy. What other things would you see, hear, and feel in the backyard? In what ways would these things look, sound, and feel different to you than to the puppy?

Suggested Activities:

1. Have the class draw a picture of what they think the puppy in this poem looks like.

2. Have each student try writing his own poem about the activities of the puppy, using the abab rhyme scheme.

3. Break the class up into small groups. Give each group two pairs of rhymed words, and see if they can come up with a four-line poem using the pairs in an abab rhyme scheme.

Example: sun--fun, play--gray
When the sky is full of sun
We like to go out and play
But playing isn't very much fun
When the sky is cold and gray.

Some pairs to get them (and you) started:

fly--sky	lark--bark
dog--frog	jump--bump
rain--drain	see--tree
slide--hide	fight--night
can--plan	pool--cool

Additional Poems:

"There Was a Lady"--Anon.

There was a lady lov'd a swine,
Honey, quoth she,
Pig, Hog, wilt thou be mine?
Hoogh, quoth he.

I'll build thee a silver sty,
Honey, quoth she;
And in it thou shalt lie,
Hoogh, quoth he.

Pinn'd with a silver pin,
Honey, quoth she;
That you may go out and in,
Hoogh, quoth he.

Wilt thou have me now,
Honey? quoth she;
Hoogh, hoogh, hoogh, quoth he,
And went his way.

Analysis:

Traditional children's poetry often shows a surprisingly ironic and mature attitude toward life, and this engaging poem is a particularly good example. Long a favorite among English children, it is not only humorous in situation (a lady improbably falling in love with a pig), but it states a moral somewhat in the manner of a fable. The moral might be stated, "You cannot buy love with money or gifts." Perhaps there is a more

subtle moral too--"Don't waste your affection on unworthy objects or people who won't appreciate it."

It is entirely possible that your class may not want to see any moral in the poem, preferring instead to enjoy it simply for the sake of its humor. Don't impose a "message" on the poem unless they seem to welcome such an approach.

The humor of the poem comes from the contrast between the eagerness of the lady and the unwillingness of the pig, who is so stoic about the tempting offer made to him that all he will answer is "hoogh." A good way to point up this humor is to have the poem read aloud, with a girl student taking the part of the lady and a boy that of the pig. (Boys, by the way, will probably have a large appreciation for the attitude of the pig.) After that, try initiating a discussion of why the poem is funny.

Call attention to the fact that this poem, like "The Puppy," is composed of four-line stanzas or quatrains, rhyming abab. The rhythm of the lines is rather unusual for the quatrain form--the first and third lines have four main beats, while the second and fourth have only two. (Have the class pound out the rhythm once or twice as you read the poem aloud.) See if you can get the class to recognize how this varying line length (form) supports the meaning of the poem: the shortness of the pig's answers is appropriate to show his detachment and lack of interest, while the longer lines reflect the extended pleading and involvement of the lady.

Since the poem's archaic diction is characteristic of both nursery rhymes and religious music, your students shouldn't have much trouble adapting to it. The only word they may be unfamiliar with is quoth, meaning said. They should enjoy this one!

Readiness:

1. Do you like pigs? What kind of animal are they?

2. What would you think if you knew someone who was in love with a pig?

Suggested Questions:

1. What story does this poem tell? (Have the class summarize the stanzas to make sure they understand the concept of a sty pinned (i.e., locked) with a silver pin.)

2. What do you think of the lady in this poem? Of the pig?

3. Do you think the poet wants us to learn anything from this poem or did he just write it to entertain us?

4. What is the poem's stanza form? What is its rhyme scheme?

5. Are the quatrains in this poem different from those in "The Puppy"? How? (Get into rhythm or line length.)

Suggested Activities:

1. See if the class can come up with any interesting tunes or melodies for this poem.

2. Look for other poems with this rhyme scheme, and make a notebook of your favorites. Perhaps you can illustrate this notebook.

3. Try writing your own four-line poems using abab rhyme scheme. Some possible topics are listed below:

How the world would look if I were a pig (or some other animal)

Building a tree house

My day at the State Fair

My first airplane ride

The birthday party

In the following additional poems, emphasize stanza form; point out the different rhyme schemes that quatrains can have.

Readiness:

"For a Dead Kitten" (abab)

1. Vocabulary: velvet-shod (like a kitten's feet)
immense

2. Is Life immense? Is Death?

3. When life goes out of a pet's body, what is left?

"Unsatisfied Yearning" (abcb)

1. Vocabulary: unsatisfied yearning

2. (Treat "unsatsified yearning" seriously. You might help make the poem even more enjoyable.)

3. Is there anything you desire more than anything else in the whole world--and know you can't have it?

4. Supposing a miracle happened and you got it? Would you be satisfied with it? What does it feel like to be satisfied?

"Break, Break, Break" (abcb)

1. (It is necessary to know that Tennyson wrote this poem as an expression of how he felt after the death of a very close friend. Tennyson sat on a hill overlooking the ocean. Below him were children playing and ships sailing on the bay. Life was going on, even though Tennyson was very sad.)

2. Vocabulary: stately
haven
crags

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

Break, break, break,
    On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
    The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
    That he shouts with his sister at
        play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
    That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
    To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
    And the sound of a voice that is
        still!

Break, break, break,
    At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is
        dead
    Will never come back to me.

--Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Lesson 3: BALLAD STANZA

(Ballad stanza: A special type of quatrain, frequently used in ballads, consisting of alternating lines of tetrameter and trimeter, rhyming abcb.)

Purpose: To familiarize students with the form of the ballad stanza and acquaint them with some of the more famous ballads.

Selections: "Sir Patrick Spens," Anon. (text below)

"Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree," by A. E. Housman (text below)

"Get Up and Bar the Door," Anon. (text below)

"The Yarn of the Nancy Bell," by W. S. Gilbert (text below)

"Barbara Allen's Cruelty," Anon. (text below)

Analysis:

Since the ballad stanza is really a specialized form of the quatrain, its study follows naturally from the earlier lesson on the quatrain. Although there are many variations, the ballad stanza is basically a quatrain of alternating iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter, rhyming abcb. The ballad generally tells a simple tale, centered around a highly emotional or crucial situation. The story is related impersonally, and frequently offers no clues as to the motivations or actions which precede the climactic situation being related.

You will not need to go into long discussion with your class about the origins of the traditional ballad. Suffice it to say that they are anonymous, probably of communal origin, and that they existed in oral tradition for long periods before they were ever written down. The literary ballad is an adaptation of the ballad form and subject matter, composed by a single poet with the use of more sophisticated and carefully planned techniques.

Many of your students will be familiar with ballads, either the traditional ballad or the adaptations of the ballad form used by such popular artists as Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, and Joan Baez. You should be able to arouse considerable interest by asking your students to transcribe the lyrics of a popular ballad, and discussing its form compared with the traditional and literary ballads in this section.

"Sir Patrick Spens" is one of the most familiar of the traditional ballads, and will probably be known to some of your students. It is adapted here to eliminate much of the dialect in which it usually appears. You will notice that it has most of the characteristics mentioned above. There is the standard ballad stanza, the central incident of the ill-fated voyage, the impersonal narration, and the absence of detailed explanations.

Housman's poem is an excellent example of the literary ballad. The basic stanza form is followed, with the exception that the rhyme is more complex: abab. The meter is smoother, primarily because the literary ballad was never designed to be sung (whereas the traditional ballad was never meant to be written down). There is a more conscious and practiced use of such devices as the repetition of phrases and words. But the poet has kept many of the same characteristics of the traditional ballad--the crucial moment with little previous explanation (what was the quarrel?); the objective use of dialogue; the simplicity of diction.

Readiness:

"Sir Patrick Spens" and "Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree"

1. Play recordings of popular ballads. Have the children transcribe the words and read the ballads as stories. Then further analysis of their structure would be the next logical step.

2. Have lyrics of popular ballads already dittoed. Have the children read the ballads and observe their structure.

3. The vocabulary in older ballads may cause some difficulty; but an overemphasis on unfamiliar terms may create an unnecessary side issue and destroy the enjoyment of the ballad form. In the first of these poems, for example, it would be unnecessary to fuss about Dumferling, other than perhaps to introduce it as a city and make a point in word analysis (Dum-fer-ling). On the other hand, the use of loth probably should be introduced before reading so that the children will not miss its meaning in the poem. Also, fathoms may be introduced if the children have not already learned this word.

Suggested Questions:

1. Look at the rhythm of one stanza of "Sir Patrick Spens" and one of "Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree." Which is smoother? Can you think of any reason? --(Introduce the idea of traditional and literary ballads. The first, communal in composition, oral in transmission, and designed to be sung, is rougher in rhythm because less conscious craft went into it and the tune helped carry it. The other is consciously written by one man as a poem, with time to work it over and smooth it out into a final, fixed, and unsung form.)

2. What was the reason for Sir Patrick's voyage? What was the quarrel between Maurice and the speaker? Why aren't we told? Does it bother us? --(Ballads don't tell, probably because the original story was familiar to the original audience, and there was no need--a device continued in literary ballads.)

3. How do you think ballads originally came to be written? --(They probably sprang up around some local incident of note. Encourage the class to speculate on this evidence of instinctive fondness for rhyme, rhythm, music, narrative--a fondness they all share.)

Suggested Activities:

1. Many popular songs are called ballads. Find some, and discuss their poetic form as well as their narrative content. How many ballad characteristics do they show?

2. Bring to class and play some recordings of ballads. Ask the students to find someone--a parent, relative, or friend--who knows a traditional ballad. Have them bring the versions to class and compare them for differences. Discuss variation due to oral transmission.

3. Make a mural illustrating the central incident of several ballads. If it proves to be a pretty violent or grim record, point out that this is what sticks in people's minds and what they tell stories about.

4. Take a significant local incident or happening at school and try composing a ballad about it.

5. Invite a local guitarist (the country is now littered with them) to sing ballads to the class and discuss ballad techniques.

Additional Poems:

The additional poems provided here are meant to enrich your students understanding of the ballad. Some of the selections may be a little too "literary" or too difficult in other ways. We cannot emphasize too much that one of the best ways to introduce the ballad is to use modern selections that are accessible to the experience and memory of your students. Encourage them to bring in their favorite ballads, or else make a list from their suggestions and bring some in yourself. The following are just a few of nearly innumerable possibilities:

"Puff, the Magic Dragon"--Peter, Paul, & Mary

"Yellow Submarine"--The Beatles

"The Times They are a-Changin'"--Bob Dylan

"Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme"--Simon & Garfunkel

"What Have They Done to the Rain"--Joan Baez

"Ode to Billy Joe"--Bobby Gentry

"A Simple Song of Freedom"--Tim Hardin

Also, don't forget the numerous well-known American cowboy ballads: "Git Along, Little Dogies," "Old Chisolm Trail," "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie," and so on.

Readiness:

"Get Up and Bar the Door"

1. Vocabulary: Martinmas (a feast to St. Martin; November 11)
goodwife
goodman

2. It may be interesting to introduce the concept that sometimes adults don't act very grown-up.

"The Yarn of the Nancy Bell"

1. Vocabulary: wight
bo'sun (boatswain)
quid (of tobacco)
midshipmite (midshipman)

2. You might pose the riddle to the children: How could one man possibly be the captain, cook, first-mate, bo'sun, midshipmite, and crew of a ship?

"Barbara Allen's Curelty"

1. You might explain the old custom of ringing the church bell very slowly when someone died. Perhaps it would be wise to introduce the term knelling with this concept.

2. The use of the term healths will probably be unknown to the children. This is a rather important concept in the poem, since it helps explain why Barbara Allen was angry.

SIR PATRICK SPENS

The King sits in Dumferling town,
Drinking the blood-red wine:
"O where will I get good sailors
To sail this ship of mine?"

Up and spoke an old knight,
Sat at the King's right knee:
"Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
That sails upon the sea."

The King has written a broad letter,
And signed it with his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick read
A loud laugh laughed he:
The next line that Sir Patrick read,
A tear blinded his ee[1].

"O who is this has done this deed,
This ill deed done to me,
To send me out this time of the year
To sail upon the sea?

Make haste, make haste, my merry men all,
Our good ship sails at morn."
"O say not so, my master dear,
For I fear a deadly storm.

[1]ee: eyes

Late, late last night I saw the new moon
With the old moon in her arm[2],
And I fear, I fear, my master dear,
That we will come to harm."

O our Scots nobles were right loth
To wet their cork-heeled shoon;[3]
But long ere all the play was played,
Their hats they swam aboon[4].

O long, long will their ladies sit
With their fans into their hand,
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land.

O long, long will the ladies stand
With their gold combs in their hair,
Waiting for their own dear lords,
For they'll see them no mair[5].

Half-o'er, half-o'er to Abadour
'Tis fifty fathoms deep,
And there lies good Sir Patrick Spens
With the Scots lords at his feet.

--Anonymous

[2]Seeing the outline of the dark part of the moon was taken as a sign of an approaching storm. [3]shoon: shoes [4]aboon: about [5]mair: more

FAREWELL TO BARN AND STACK AND TREE

"Farewell to barn and stack and tree,
Farewell to Severn shore.
Terence, look your last at me,
For I come home no more.

"The sun burns on the half-mown hill.
By now the blood is dried;
And Maurice amongst the hay lies still
And my knife is in his side.

"My mother thinks us long away;
'Tis time the field were mown.
She had two sons at rising day,
To-night she'll be alone.

"And here's a bloody hand to shake,
And oh, man, here's good-bye;
We'll sweat no more on scythe[1] and rake,
My bloody hands and I.

"I wish you strength to bring you pride,
And a love to keep you clean,
And I wish you luck, come Lammastide[2],
At racing on the green.

"Long for me the rick[3] will wait,
And long will wait the fold,
And long will stand the empty plate,
And dinner will be cold."

--A. E. Housman

[1] scythe: large sickle [2] Lammastide: August 1, an English harvest festival [3] rick: a frame for holding hay

GET UP AND BAR THE DOOR

It fell about the Martinmas time,
And a gay time it was then,
When our goodwife got puddings to make,
And she's boiled them in the pan.

The wind so cold blew south and north,
And blew into the floor;
Quoth our goodman to our goodwife,
"Get up and bar the door."

"My hand is in my household work,
Goodman, as ye may see;
And it will not be barred for a hundred years,
If it's to be barred by me!"

They made a pact between them both,
They made it firm and sure,
That whosoe'er should speak the first,
Should rise and bar the door.

Then by there came two gentlemen,
At twelve o'clock at night,
And they could see neither house nor hall,
Nor coal nor candlelight.

"Now whether is this a rich man's house,
Or whether is it a poor?"
But never a word would one of them speak,
For barring of the door.

The guests they ate the white puddings,
And then they ate the black;
Tho' much the goodwife thought to her-
self,
Yet never a word she spake.

Then said one stranger to the other,
"Here, man, take ye my knife;
Do ye take off the old man's beard,
And I'll kiss the goodwife."

"There's no hot water to scrape it off,
And what shall we do then?"
"Then why not use the pudding broth,
That boils into the pan?"

O up then started our goodman,
An angry man was he;
"Will ye kiss my wife before my eyes?
And with pudding broth scald me?"

Then up and started our goodwife,
Gave three skips on the floor:
"Goodman, you've spoken the foremost
word.
Get up and bar the door!"

THE YARN OF THE NANCY BELL

'Twas on the shores that round our coast
From Deal to Ramsgate span,
That I found alone on a piece of stone
An elderly naval man.

His hair was weedy, his beard was long,
And weedy and long was he,
And I heard this wight on the shore recite
In a singular minor key:

"Oh, I am a cook and a captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig,
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig."

And he shook his fists and he tore his hair,
Till I really felt afraid,
For I couldn't help thinking the man had
been drinking,
And so I simply said:

"Oh, elderly man, it's little I know
Of the duties of men of the sea,
And I'll eat my hand if I understand
However you can be

"At once a cook, and a captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig,
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig."

Then he gave a hitch to his trousers, which
Is a trick all seamen larn,
And having got rid of a thumping quid,
He spun this painful yarn:

"'Twas in the good ship Nancy Bell
That we sailed to the Indian Sea,
And there on a reef we come to grief,
Which has often occurred to me.

"And pretty nigh all the crew was drowned
(There was seventy-seven o' soul),
And only ten of the Nancy's men
Said 'Here!' to the muster-roll.

"There was me and the cook and the captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig,
And the bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig.

"For a month we'd neither wittles nor drink,
Till a-hungry we did feel,
So we drawed a lot, and, accordin' shot
The captain for our meal.

"The next lot fell to the Nancy's mate,
And a delicate dish he made;
Then our appetite with the midshipmite
We seven survivors stayed.

"And then we murdered the bo'sun tight,
And he much resembled pig;
Then we wittled free, did the cook and me,
On the crew of the captain's gig.

"Then only the cook and me was left,
And the delicate question, 'Which
Of us two goes to the kettle?' arose,
And we argued it out as sich.

"For I loved that cook as a brother, I did,
And the cook he worshipped me;
But we'd both be blowed if we'd either be
stowed
In the other chap's hold, you see.

"'I'll be eat if you dines off me,' says
Tom;
'Yes, that,' says I, 'You'll be--'
'I'm boiled if I die, my friend,' quoth I;
And 'Exactly so,' quoth he.

"Says he, 'Dear James, to murder me
Were a foolish thing to do,
For don't you see that you can't cook me,
While I can--and will--cook you!

"So he boils the water, and takes the salt
And the pepper in portions true
(Which he never forgot) and some chopped
shalot,
And some sage and parsley too.

"'Come here,' says he, with a proper pride
Which his smiling features tell,
'Twill soothing be if I let you see
How extremely nice you'll smell.'

"And he stirred it round and round and
round,
And he sniffed at the foaming froth;
When I ups with his heels, and smothers
his squeals
In the scum of the boiling broth.

"And I eat that cook in a week or less,
And--as I eating be
The last of his chops, why, I almost drops,
For a wessel in sight I see!

"And I never larf, and I never smile,
And I never lark nor play,
But sit and croak, and a single joke
I have--which is to say:

"'Oh, I am a cook and captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig,
And a bo'sum tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig!'"

--W. S. Gilbert

BARBARA ALLEN'S CRUELTY

All in the merry month of May,
When green buds they were swelling,
Young Jemmy Grove on his death-bed lay
For love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his man unto her then,
To the town where she was dwelling:
"O haste and come to my master dear,
If your name be Barbara Allen."

Slowly, slowly she rose up,
And she came where he was lying;
And when she drew the curtain by,
Says, "Young man, I think you're dying."

"O it's I am sick, and very, very sick,
And it's all for Barbara Allen."
"O the better for me you'll never be,
Tho' your heart's blood were a-spilling!

"O do you not mind,[1] young man," she says,
"When the red wine you were filling,
That you made the healths go round and round,
And slighted Barbara Allen?"

He turned his face unto the wall,
And death with him was dealing:
"Adieu, adieu, my dear friends all;
Be kind to Barbara Allen."

[1]do you not mind: don't you remember

As she was walking o'er the fields,
    She heard the dead-bell knelling;
And every toll the dead-bell struck,
    Cried, "Woe to Barbara Allen!"

"O mother, mother, make my bed,
    To lay me down in sorrow.
My love has died for me today,
    I'll die for him tomorrow."

Lesson 4: QUATRAIN AS PART OF A LARGER UNIT

Purpose: To examine a poem in which the quatrain functions as an integral part of a larger unit, rather than as an individual stanza.

Selections: "The Seal," by William Jay Smith, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 26.

"The Snare," by James Stephens, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 166.

Analysis: "The Seal"

"The Seal" illustrates further the flexibility of the quatrain as a poetic form. Here, in contrast to what your students have seen before, the quatrain is used as part of a larger unit. They should have no difficulty in recognizing that the poem is built of seven quatrains, but with no stanza break. In a poem printed this way, the convention is to continue the rhyme scheme through the entire stanza, so a diagram would be abcbdefe and so on.

Of more interest is the relation between structure and meaning. The opening quatrain shows the seal diving down into the sea, succeeding quatrains describe his progress through the underwater world, and in the last quatrain he surfaces again with his prize. Successive states in the seal's journey are indicated by the punctuation and grammatical structure of the quatrains. Except for the first, every quatrain ends with either an exclamation point or a semicolon, suggesting that each four lines forms one unit in the thought progression. The first lines of most of the quatrains are indicator phrases presenting some visual change or advance: "See how he dives," "See how he swims," "Back up he swims."

The breathless rapidity of the seal's actions is emphasized by the short lines (only two accents per line), the dominance of sibilant and explosive consonant sounds (s, k, st, sh, f, and p), and the heavy use of words with only one syllable--expecially onomatopoeic words like "zoom," "whoop," "bark," and "plot."

The typography of the poem will probably cause comment, so encourage the class to discuss what, if anything, it contributes to the poem's effect. They will probably see some relationship between the wavy line arrangement and the seal's slippery elusiveness while fishing in his "watery room."

Readiness:

"The Seal"

1. Would you rather be a seal or a whale? Why?

2. Have you seen seals? What are they like?

3. Would you like to have a seal for a pet? Why? Where would you keep him? What would you feed him?

Suggested Questions:

1. How is this poem put together? What is the rhyme scheme of the first four lines? Have you ever seen this pattern before? Work out the rhyme scheme for the whole poem. (abcb defe ghih jklk mnon pqrq stut)

2. Why do you think the poem is printed this way? Does the way it is printed remind you in any way of its subject?

3. Make a list of the words which most vividly show the seal's actions, then those which give the best impression of the sounds he makes. Say these words aloud. How would you describe their sound?

4. Do seals really have "wrists"? Why do you suppose the poet put such a detail in his poem?

Suggested Activities:

1. Have the class experiment with writing "form" poems, whose typography reveals something about the subject. For example, a Christmas poem in the form of a Christmas tree. (Possible subjects: snakes, sailboats, birds, etc.)

2. Let the class try their hand at writing quatrains that are connected in some way--either by repetition of words or lines, or by the fact that they deal with the same subject. You might get them to understand the concept by recalling the refrains of some of the ballads studied in the previous lesson, or by reciting or playing the song "Dry Bones" ("The head bone's connected to the neck bone; the neck bone's connected to the chest bone," and so on.)

Additional Poem:

"The Snare," by James Stephens

Analysis:

This poem features an interesting pattern of interlocked quatrains, and repetition of lines from one stanza to another. Have your class follow the rhyme scheme all the way through, assigning appropriate letters (the total rhyme scheme will read abab bcbc cdcd defe`. If they are alert, they will notice that the second-to-last line breaks the pattern established by the earlier stanzas. It would be interesting to have them speculate about why the poet does this. It is perhaps best seen as one of the devices the poet uses for emphasis: the line which breaks the pattern is an anguished cry from the poet in response to the rabbit's cry of pain; it really expresses the moment of the poet's strongest agitation and concern. Also, the repetition of lines from one stanza to the next builds up suspense and apprehension about the fate of the rabbit and also suggests the poet's movements as he searches for the rabbit (perhaps going over the same spots twice). The overall formal point here is that the quatrains function as parts of a larger unit--the whole poem--rather than as isolated stanzas.

Readiness:

1. What reaction do you have when you hear a cry of pain?

2. Have you ever seen a small animal caught in a trap? How did you feel about it?

Lesson 5: LIMERICK

(Limerick: A five line poem rhyming aabba, with a relatively formal rhythm pattern.)

Purpose: To acquaint students with the formal requirements of the limerick.

Selections: "There Once Was a Lady of Niger," Anon. (text below)

"Old Midas the Miser" (text below)

"The Fat Man from France" (text below)

"There Once Was a Young Boy Named Billy" (text below)

Analysis:

Hardly necessary. Children love limericks, and probably know more than you do.

A study of the limerick is suggested here because it is technically a very complex form, with very strict rules. Since your class has been studying rhyme scheme and stanza patterns and metrics, they might enjoy seeing how such considerations govern a fixed form with which they are quite familiar.

The form consists of five lines, rhyming aabba. The first, second, and fifth lines are "long" lines--usually an iambic foot (one unstressed followed by one stressed syllable) followed by two anapestic feet (two unstressed followed by one stressed syllable). The third and fourth lines are usually two anapests. It is suggested you express the metrical pattern to your class in terms of stressed and unstressed syllables rather than using the technical names.

The following is a typical limerick:

There once was a lady of Niger,	a
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger.	a
They returned from the ride,	b
With the lady inside,	b
And the smile on the face of the tiger.	a

Select several other limericks and discuss their form. The additional ones provided here are only a start; numerous collections of this type of poetry are available. Your class should enjoy playing with limericks, and they will learn quite a lot about poetic form at the same time.

Suggested Activities:

1. Ask your class to recite any limericks they may know. (Many of them are as familiar to youngsters as nursery rhymes.)

2. As a writing exercise the creation of limericks--or the completion of one where the first line is given--should be a natural.

3. Have your students exchange the limericks they have written, and ask each student to illustrate the limerick he got in the trade.

4. Have your class make a collection of their favorite limericks, either individually or as a group. Turn them loose in the school library, or have them collect examples by asking others.

Additional Poems:

Old Midas the miser can't sleep,
He's afraid that his wealth he won't keep,
And those feathery pests
In the trees in their nests
Taunt him all the night long with "Cheep! Cheep!"

To the fair came a fat man from France,
Who was lucky at all games of chance.
He won and was glad,
But the losers got mad,
And ran off with the seat of his pants!

There once was a young boy named Billy.
All the girls thought he was pretty silly.
With a gold crown he ran
Up to Mary and Ann
Crying, "Bow down, for I am King Willy!"

Lesson 6: FREE VERSE I (Haiku, Cinquain)

(Free Verse: Poetry with no predominant or regular rhythm pattern or rhyme scheme.)

Purpose: To familiarize students with the formal principles of haiku and cinquain.

Selections: "Frog-school competing" (text below)

"Leaves fly in my face" (text below)

"All its advertisements," Anon., reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 88.

"An old silent pond," by Basho, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 92.

"If things were better," by Issa, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 139.

Analysis:

Children are probably more aware now than they have ever been before that poetry does not have to rhyme. In recent years, the influx of free verse forms such as haiku and cinquain into the classroom have helped develop this awareness. However, it must be remembered that free verse is not without some sort of organizing principle. But that principle is not a formal stanza or rhyme pattern.

A poetic form like haiku clearly illustrates the point that free verse can fit into specific formal frames. For instance, there are special rules for the shape of a Japanese haiku: each poem can have only 17 syllables, divided as follows:

The first line has five syllables:

1 2 3 4 5
A spark in the sun,

The second line has seven syllables:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
this tiny flower has roots

The third line again has five syllables:

1 2 3 4 5
deep in the cool earth.

Here are some more examples:

Frog-school competing
with lark-school at dusk softly
in the art of song.

Leaves fly in my face,
rain peppers the somber hills,
dark autumn has come.

Additional Poems:

1. "All its advertisements," Anonymous

2. "An old silent pond," by Basho

3. "If things were better," by Issa

Like haiku, cinquain has certain formal specifications:

Line 1: One word (which may be the title)
Line 2: Two words (describing the title)
Line 3: Three words (in action)
Line 4: Four words (a feeling)
Line 5: One word(referring to the title)

Here are four examples, and you can easily write more on your own:

ICE CREAM--
Soft stuff
Lick the drips
Melting mounds of color
Cold!

FROG--
Green mouth
Salutes the bog
Proud on a lily-pad
Splash!

PICNIC--
Lunch outdoors
Fighting hungry flies
Warm sun shining down
Ants!

KITTEN--
Rough playmate
Paws swat hard
Claws in my skin
Ouch!

Suggested Activities:

Most children should enjoy trying to compose their own poems using the above forms. Encourage them to observe the world around them carefully before actually writing. There are several ways you might do this:

1. You could take them on a nature field trip to fill them with sense impressions they could use in writing. (Have them write these down before returning to the classroom.)

2. Or you could show them pictures of various subjects (a landscape, a still life, a sports action shot) and ask them to write down the words the pictures make them think of. Then discuss the word lists, having the class pick out which are action words and which descriptive. (Some children will need experience in distinguishing the two types, especially before trying to write cinquain.)

3, Ask someone--a student, a fellow teacher, an outsider--to pose in front of the class in some unusual position (or several different positions). Have the class write their impressions of the model in the form of haiku. It might be a good idea to write a schema for the haiku form on the board, like this:

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Then break the class up into groups and have each group compare and discuss its poems.

4. Bring a widely assorted group of objects to class and, breaking the class into groups, give each group one object and ask them to compose a cinquain about it. Emphasize that this is to be a group effort, and each member of each group must contribute something to the final poem before it will be acceptable. Some possible objects:

a loaf of uncut bread
an ornate candlestick
a bowl of spaghetti
a glass-ball paperweight (one of those with a scene inside)
a piece of brocade or intricate lace

The possibilities are obviously endless. Use your imagination, choosing objects with an eye to variety and texture.

Lesson 7: FREE VERSE II

Purpose: **To stress that free verse, while different in form from traditional poetry, nevertheless has definable formal characteristics.**

Selections: "Crossing Kansas by Train," by Donald Justice, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 45.

"Kansas Boy," by Ruth Lechlitner, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 50.

"Fueled," by Marcie Hans, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 83.

"August From My Desk," by Roland Flint, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 49.

"Me up at Does," by e. e. cummings, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 167.

"Gone Forever," by Barriss Mills, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 18.

Analysis: **"Crossing Kansas by Train" and "Kansas Boy"**

Having examined the relatively simple free verse forms of haiku and cinquain, students should be ready to explore free verse which organizes itself more subtly, according to the requirements of its subject. The technical name for this is organic form, but the idea not the term is the important thing to communicate to your students.

"Crossing Kansas by Train" is both a good poem and a good illustration of how free verse takes its form from its subject. The short lines of the poem have a meaningful rhythm; they suggest telephone poles whipping regularly by as the train proceeds west. Their run-on character causes the visual images to flow into each other too smoothly and rapidly for ornament, as if the poem's speaker were turning his head to take in brief impressions of a landscape he is quickly passing by. Thus, the "form" of this poem arises directly out of meaning or content; it is not a preconceived pattern into which the content must be pressed.

The basic situation of the poem is so much a part of American culture that your students should readily grasp it, even though they may not yet have experienced it in their own lives. It is human nature to dream of what lies beyond the horizon, but the dream is especially natural for Americans, who have the whole mythology of the pioneers and the Old West to look back on. Your students are saturated with the Western myth in the schoolroom, on the playground, and in front of the television set.

The interest in this poem lies in showing how the poet manages to achieve a fresh statement of the myth. A good way to get students imaginatively into the poem is to draw upon their knowledge of geography. The flatness of Kansas is proverbial; anyone who has crossed that seemingly endless expanse can testify to the upsurge of relief felt at the first view of the mountains.

To drive home the emotional opposites in question, you might show the class contrasting pictures--of Kansas (one of those readily available perspective shots, taken on a railroad track, with telephone poles disappearing into the distance), and of a cool green mountain range such as, say, the Sierra Nevadas of California. This could lead directly into a discussion of the forlornness of the personified telephone poles, whose beckoning "arms" the birds pass by in favor of some place beyond, where there are trees, and water. Having the class paraphrase the statement beginning "The mountains start here" (or doing so yourself) will give you another opportunity, as with "Puppy," to show the virtues of compression as a poetic device.

To help your students recognize the differences as well as the similarities between a poem written in free verse and a more systematically rhymed one, a comparison poem has been included with the lesson. The subject of the two poems is not dissimilar, thus allowing you to concentrate more fully on the marked difference in appearance and rhyme scheme between the free verse poem and the comparison poem.

In "Kansas Boy," the poet focuses on sea-longing rather than on the mountains, but the basic emotions are the same. See if the class can discuss the different treatments given the same theme. They will certainly be able to see that the couplet form imposes a more obvious control than the free verse form of the Justice poem.

If you have an especially good class, you might discuss how the difference in form affects the internal structure of the poems. Where the images in the first poem are completely unadorned due to the poem's rapid movement, those in the second are expanded at some length--for instance, Lechlitner takes about three lines to make a comparison between the rippling corn and ocean waves. Students should be discouraged from making statements of preference regarding form; try to make them see that one form is not absolutely "better" than another, only better in terms of what the poet is trying to do.

Readiness:

"Crossing Kansas by Train"

1. If you were riding through Kansas on a train would you expect to see mountains? desert? animals? birds? lakes?

"Kansas Boy"

1. Since Kansas is quite flat, how could anyone suggest it could look like an ocean?

2. Here's a hint: what kind of grain would you expect to see growing in Kansas?

Suggested Questions:

1. Read the Justice poem aloud, pausing slightly at the end of each line. Why do you think the poet placed the poem this way on the page?

2. Have you ever ridden on a train? Does the rhythm of Justice's poem in any way remind you of the train ride?

3. Although Justice never specifically mentions heat, how do you know that Kansas is hot? How do you know that it is bright?

4. What is conveyed by the phrase "for a long time now"? Does it tell you anything about the length of the train ride? About the size of Kansas?

5. Near the end of the first poem, the poet says, "The mountains start... behind the closed eyes of a farmer's sons." Does he mean the mountains really start there? If not, what does he mean?

6. Have you ever "daydreamed" of going somewhere far away? If so, how does that help you to understand the feeling of the boys in these two poems?

7. Why do you think the Pioneers were willing to suffer such terrible hardships to get to the West? Was it just retreat from unpleasant surroundings, or was it something more?

Suggested Activities:

1. See if any of your students have taken a train or motor trip across Kansas and have them describe the experience, relating as many sense impressions as they can remember.

2. Have the class write a composition on one of the topics below:

The dream of the Pioneers

The trip I made across _____ (The Rocky Mountains, The Mojave Desert, The Pacific Ocean, etc.)

3. To get your students to consider the notion that some kinds of words and rhythm are more appropriate for a given subject than others, try the following exercise. Place on the board the following diagram:

How would you describe:

	Kinds of: Words	Lines
A frog hopping?		
A swan swimming?		
A train coming?		
A woman beating a rug on a clothesline?		
Waves on the beach?		

For each item ask the students these questions:

Examples: "How would you describe a frog hopping?"

1. Would long or short words be better? } ask for examples and list them
   Would soft or harsh sounds be better? }
2. Would long smooth lines or short jerky lines be better?

The answers should fall into fairly clear patterns: for instance, you would use short jerky words and lines for the frog hopping, and long, liquid words to suggest the smooth gliding of the swan through the water--and so on. If this exercise succeeds, it could lead to the writing of individual poems on the listed items.

But emphasize this: In free verse, subject and form should go together.

Additional Poems:

"Fueled"

The relationship between content and form is worth exploring here: the short lines and mainly monosyllabic words underline the sense of urgency and speed of a rocket "tearing a tunnel" through the sky. Though the poem builds on the same basic framework in the second section, which deals with the seedling, the lines are a little longer, reflecting the fact that now the poet is talking about a more metaphorical application of the idea of thrust--a seedling "urging" its way up. A most striking formal feature is the last four lines, which graphically illustrate the relative importance of the two ascents (rocket and seedling): whereas great crowds

cheer the launching of a rocket, "no one even claps" at a much greater miracle, the process of life itself. Stringing these four words out over four lines makes the reader pause longer on each one and drives the ironic contrast more strongly home.

Readiness:

"Fueled"

1. (Have children describe the most recent rocket launching.)

2. Were you thrilled? Do you think people cheered when the rocket went up?

3. Would you cheer if you saw a plant or tree start growing up through the soil? Why or why not?

4. Which do you think is a greater power--being able to build a rocket, or creating a living thing? Why?

"August from My Desk"

1. When you have a long, boring job to do, do you ever daydream? What about?

2. Do adults usually daydream?

"Me up at does"

1. Why do humans kill mice?

2. Do humans do anything that mice do?

"Gone Forever"

1. Why is it that we have such a hard time explaining what a poem is?

2. How does it feel to lose something important to you?

ED 075849

METRICS, SCANSION

REVISED VERSION FOR TRYOUT 1971-72

This unit was our least successful one last year. A few teachers reported good success with it, but most thought it was too difficult and not interesting. We have revised it with easier poems and less technical emphasis. A few comments may be in order.

First, it was probably a mistake for us to suggest introducing this material so early. We suggest now that you save it until later in the year, or make it an optional or supplementary unit. There is of course no need to go into it at all if you don't want to, but we would like to get some feedback from this revised version if possible.

Second, all the material in the introduction to the unit is background information for you if you want it. We are sure you will not want to go into all the technical jargon with your class.

We have revised the unit to make it more coherent, putting the readiness suggestions, questions, and activities in sequence around each poem or group of poems. We have tried to suggest activities that will involve the students more, and help the teacher stay away from the front of the class.

The concepts treated in this unit are applicable to any poem. If you find the selections treated here unsatisfactory, you can substitute other poems of your own choosing.

METRICS, SCANSION

Metrics: The study primarily of the rhythms of poetry, but by extension the study of its sounds as well. This unit deals exclusively with rhythms.

Scansion: A system of representing metrical patterns. Usually an accented syllable is marked with a slash (/), an unaccented one with a dash (–) or a curve (˘). Metrical feet are indicated by a slash line.

Hickory / dickory / dock. /

Rhetorical stress: The system of accent given to a line of poetry when read for its sense, as opposed to a slavish following of the metrical pattern. Reading for meaning.

INTRODUCTION

Poetry has been defined as the rhythmic use of language. As a definition it is no more satisfactory than any other definition of poetry, but it does serve to draw attention to one of poetry's most fundamental elements. Even in the modern era of poetry, which tends to feature looser forms and less regular rhythms, poets concern themselves with the rhythm of their lines. Indeed, some modern critics claim that the only distinction between poetry and prose is the more regular and carefully controlled rhythm of poetry.

The study of the rhythm of poetry, and the analysis of the various meters a poem can use, is called metrics. The representation of the meter of a poetic line according to some system of accents is called scansion.

Certainly the rhythm of poetry is one of its elements which most immediately appeals to children, and you should have little trouble interesting them in exploring some of its basic aspects. Your major problem will be to determine the lengths to which you wish to go with your class, and how technical you will want to get. We advise caution: nothing disenchants young students more quickly than a forced study of technicalities. In dealing with metrics, perhaps more than anywhere else, it is important to remember that the primary aim in reading poetry is enjoyment, not a mastery of technical vocabulary. With this warning in mind, let us look at some of those technicalities which you should know and which may be of interest to your students.

English poetry is rhythmical because English is an accentual language. Poetry is simply the regular and orderly arrangement of a series of stressed and unstressed syllables determined by the pronunciation of English words. In English verse certain clusters of stressed and unstressed syllables seem to recur with sufficient frequency to be identified as rhythmical units and given a name, and to be deliberately used by poets. A rhythmical unit is called a foot, and the number of feet in a line of poetry is one way of describing the line.

In much modern verse (as well as in Old English poetry) a poetic line is determined by the number of stressed syllables, with any number of unstressed syllables allowed. However, the more regular meters, involving both stressed and unstressed syllables, can be listed as follows. The first two involve two syllables, and are exact opposites.

, Iambic. An unstressed followed by a stressed syllable. To̅daý, fo̅r gét. The most common foot in English poetry. The average English sentence is basically iambic.

Trochaic. The trochee is an inverted iamb. A stressed followed by an unstressed syllable. Rúnnĭng, cárry, síngle. A very common foot, frequently used as a substitute foot in a basically iambic line. Substitution as a form of variation is discussed below.

The next two feet are clusters of three syllables, instead of two. They are also opposites.

Anapestic. The anapest is two unstressed followed by one stressed syllable. Overcóme, indiscréet. Few single words are anapestic, but it is a fairly common meter.

Dactylic. The dactyl is an inverted anapest. A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones. Underwear, dáffodil, póetry. A very heavy and obvious meter, frequently used for special effects.

Besides these main metric feet, another is useful to distinguish. The spondee, which consists of two accented syllables (dówntówn), is seldom used other than as a substitute foot.

A line of poetry is described by identifying the predominant meter, and by counting the number of feet in the line. The most common lines consist of three, four, or five feet, or trimeter, tetrameter, and pentameter. Thus the line from Wordsworth's "Daffodils," "I wandered lonely as a cloud," would be identified as iambic tetrameter, and scanned (i.e., diagrammed like this:

I wan / dered lone /ly as / a cloud.

Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib" is in anapestic tetrameter:

The Assyr /ian came down / like a wolf / on the fold.

This much technicality and terminology would scare off any youngster. Use it sparingly. We provide it here as a handy reference if you need it. The main point to make with your class is that poetry has rhythm based on stressed and unstressed syllables, and that these rhythmical systems are one of our main sources of pleasure in reading poetry. Many of your students, you will find, will enjoy doing some elementary scansion.

Substitution and Rhetorical Stress

Our response to rhythm is a basic one. It is part of what is apparently an instinctive desire for order, an instinctive love of repetition and pattern. But at the same time we can get bored if the pattern is too regular, the order too rigid, the repetition too repetitive. Along with our order we like some variety. Poetry satisfies this need for variation in two main ways, substitute feet and what is usually called rhetorical stress, which merely means reading for the meaning instead of the regular meter.

Any poem that has an absolutely regular and unvarying meter in all its lines would soon become tedious. Thus we frequently find poets substituting a different sort of metrical unit in a poem--a trochaic foot in an iambic line, for example. The break in the established rhythm of the poem is a welcome relief from a steady and monotonous thump-thump-thump beat. For example, "Daffodils," cited earlier, is heavily regular. But the final two lines of the first stanza go as follows:

Beside / the lake, / beneath / the trees,

Fluttering / and danc / ing in / the breeze.

The final line substitutes a dactyl (or a trochee, depending on how you pronounce it) for the regular iambs in the first foot of the final line. It is worth noting that the substitution is justified not only for the sake of variety, but also because the sound pattern supports the sense of the line. "Fluttering" flutters a bit.

The idea of rhetorical stress is a simple one. It is merely "reading for meaning." Most beginning readers of poetry succumb to the metrical regularity of a poem, and read for the beat instead of the sense. A good poem will play off metrical regularity against reading for meaning, using the latter as a way of achieving variation.

For an example let us return to Wordsworth and the opening line from "Daffodils," which we scanned as highly regular:

I wandered lonely as a cloud.

But reading for rhetorical stress, we would break up the regularity. There would be a heavy pause after "wandered," and the rest of the line would be read faster than the first part, with probably a descending tone. It is difficult to represent this in a diagram, but it would look roughly like this:

I wandered (pause) lonely-as-a-cloud

If you will encourage your class to read aloud, and to read for meaning, you will be able to show them that they are unconsciously maintaining a tension between their instinct to impose metrical regularity on the poem and their feeling for the sense of the words. You would be able to generate discussion about the interpretation of poetic lines: one child will read a line with one sort of stress; another will read it differently. No two people will read a line exactly the same, yet all can agree that it is, say, iambic pentameter. Encourage discussions of various readings.

What can you hope to have your class get out of all this? Perhaps more interest than you might imagine. But certainly they should become more aware of poetry as a system of rhythms; they should be able to do some elementary scansion; they should be aware of variety as well as regularity; and they should develop a greater ability to read for the meaning of the poem.

You can move into this unit with all sorts of fun and games before you get to the poetry itself. For instance, take a popular song with a strong beat (whichever one happens to be current when you come to this unit), and play it to your class as they beat out the rhythm. Bring some marches, and have them march in place or around the room as it plays. Discuss the idea of rhythm with them. For instance, why do we insist on hearing a clock go "tick tock," when it actually goes "tick tick"? We impose an iambic beat on an endless series of spondees because we unconsciously insist on rhythm. Why do we tap our feet in time to music? Your discussion of rhythm with your class is limited only by your own inventiveness.

1. RHYTHM, SCANSION

Purpose: To introduce the idea of rhythm in poetry; to introduce the concept of scansion.

Selections: Limericks, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, pages 140-141.

"Crows," by David McCord, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 25.

Note to the Teacher:

Our discussion of these and other poems will be in more or less technical terminology. But your main concern with your students is not the rote memorization of fancy terms. It is, rather, that they learn that poetry in English has a rhythm based on the accentual system of the English language, and that much poetry makes a formal use of rhythmical patterns. If they are interested and want to go on to a further study of metrics, they can, but don't force it.

The best way to begin will probably be with some preliminary activities and discussions. Some suggestions follow.

1. Make up several polysyllabic nonsense words (flamperdite, diascolous, etc.) and put them on the board. Ask your class how to pronounce them. Encourage alternate pronunciations. Discuss how pronunciations vary, and introduce the idea of stressed and unstressed syllables. Here is an opportunity to move into some dictionary work, looking up the pronunciation of words your students don't normally use. Have the class make up their own words, put them on the board, and mark them for pronunciation in stressed and unstressed syllables.

2. Reproduce the words of a popular ballad (or a school song or a traditional song) on ditto sheets. Hand them out and then play the record. Have your class mark the stressed and unstressed words. (The more regular the beat of the song you choose, the better.) In discussion, point out that any song -- like any poem -- is a regular arrangement of stresses, and that it is this which makes the rhythm to which we tap our feet.

3. Select from the week's spelling list several words with different pronunciation. Divide your class into teams, and have each see who can come up with the most similarly pronounced words in a given time. Move from there to a discussion of pronunciation, accents, etc.

Analysis:

The limerick is a quite complicated poetic form, but it is one that every fifth and sixth grade child should know. It has several variant metrical forms, depending on whether the opening foot is an iamb or an anapest, and depending on the prevalence of feminine rhymes. But its basically anapestic beat, and the variation of the short middle lines, give it a basic form which is easy to recognize. It is a five-line poem rhyming aabba, in which the first two lines and the last line are mainly anapestic trimeter, and the second and third are mainly anapestic dimeter.

"Crows" is an example of iambic meter with lines of different length. There is sufficient variation in "Crows" so that you can, if you wish, use it later for a discussion of rhetorical stress.

Readiness:

Limericks

1. Vocabulary: epicure

2. What is a limerick? Does anyone know any? Can you beat or clap the rhythm of a limerick?

"Crows"

1. Vocabulary: clamor

2. Have you ever watched crows? What have you noticed about them? Do you like to look at them? What does the writer of this poem feel about them?

Questions and Activities:

1. How many accented syllables are there in each line of a limerick?

2. Can you describe how the rhymes in a limerick work?

3. Can you find in a limerick any combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables that seem to be repeated? (This may be too difficult. See if any of your class can recognize the grouping of anapests. If you wish, introduce the term.)

4. In "Crows," mark the stressed and unstressed syllables in the first line of each stanza. Are they alike? Is there any pattern you can see? How would you describe it? (Discuss the recurrent pattern of iambic dimeter. If your class is interested, introduce the term iambic.

Of all metrical terminology, this is the most basic. They may be ready to discuss the idea of a foot, since the first line of each stanza in this poem is two quite regular iambic feet.)

5. (Teacher) Distribute on ditto sheets two or three limericks with various lines left out. Break the class up into groups and have them fill in the missing lines. Have the class discuss the merit of the supplied lines, in terms of sense and also in terms of meter and rhythm.

6. Imagine you are talking to a little green man from Mars. He asks you what a limerick is. Break into groups and compose an answer. Compare your answers and discuss which is most accurate. (Teacher: you may have to circulate and help with the descriptions; here is a chance to introduce some useful terminology, pointing out that "iambic trimeter" is easier to say than "a line in which three stressed syllables are each preceded by two unstressed syllables," or something like that.

7. Break into five groups. Each group compose the first line of a limerick and pass it on to the next. And so on, until each group must supply the final line of the limerick it started. Publish and compare the results.

2. METRICAL FOOT, SCANSION

Purpose: To develop the idea of rhythm in poetry; to introduce the concept of scansion, and of the metrical foot.

Selections: "The Cowboy's Life," by James Barton Adams, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 4.

"The Snare," by James Stephens, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 166.

Analysis: Vocabulary: Yaso range (a minor range of mountains in Southwestern Arizona; an important ranching area).

This poem has a very strong rhythm, with several different sorts of metrical feet. It should thus serve well not only as further treatment of the simple idea of rhythm in poetry, but also to introduce some of the descriptive ways of discussing those rhythms.

The lines are composed of anapests and iambs, in a fairly repetitive pattern. The third and sixth lines of every stanza are trimeter, the others two feet (dimeter). You will want to introduce the term foot. Take the first line and scan it with your class. Do the same with the second. Ask them to compare the two lines rhythmically. Someone should notice that the feet are inverted. Ask them to see if they can find other lines in the first stanza that are similar to each other rhythmically. Help them see that lines 2, 4, 5 are the same, as are lines 3 and 6.

In discussion you will want them to see that the poet is deliberately playing with the rhythm of his lines. If they wish, you can go through the rest of the poem in the same way. The scansion of the first stanza is reproduced below as

The bawl / of a steer,
To a cow / boy's ear,
Is mu / sic of sweet/est strain;
And the yel/ping notes
Of the gay / coyotes
To him / are a glad / refrain.

Suggested Questions:

1. Which of the syllables in the first line are stressed? Which in the second? Mark them with a vertical line. Mark the unstressed syllables with a horizontal line. How do the two lines compare?

2. A repeated rhythmic pattern is called a "foot." From looking at the first two lines, how many kinds of feet can you find? How many feet are there in line 3? --(They will need some help with this one. If they can't get the idea, drop it.)

3. Can you find any lines that have a similar rhythm?

4. What is the rhyme scheme of the first stanza?

Suggested Activities:

1. Divide the week's spelling words into stressed and unstressed syllables.

2. Compile a list of rhythmical sounds you hear every day.

"The Snare"

Analysis:

Most of your class probably think of rabbits as quiet animals, but when hurt or surprised they can make quite a yelp. The poet's obvious sympathy for the trapped rabbit should get a response from your students.

For a study of metrics this is an interesting poem. It is quite regular the basic pattern being iambic tetrameter, as illustrated in the first two lines. If you are scanning this poem with your class, note that after the first two lines Stephens drops the first (unaccented) syllable of the opening iamb in every line. The first stanza is scanned for you below.

I hear/ a sud / den cry/ of pain!
There is/ a rab/bit in / a snare:
Now / I hear/ the cry / again,
But/ I can / not tell / from where.

Reading Readiness:

1. Have you ever heard an animal cry out in pain?

2. How do you feel when you hear that cry? What do you do about it?

3. Supposing you heard such a sound, but you couldn't find the animal to help it. How would you feel then?

Suggested Questions :

(The suggested questions in the text are excellent.)

1. Mark the stressed and unstressed syllables in the first stanza.

2. A repeated rhythmical pattern is called a foot. Can you divide these lines into feet?

3. RHETORICAL STRESS

Purpose: To explore the idea of rhetorical stress, or reading for meaning.

Selections: "The Pheasant," by R. P. Tristram Coffin, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 120.

"Digging for China," by Richard Wilbur, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, pages 178-179.

Analysis:

Coffin's poem is as good as any to deal with the central concept of this section, but here again it should be pointed out that any poem can be used. If for some reason you want to use a different one, go ahead.

As we pointed out in the introduction to this unit, the concept is quite simple. It is simply that the regular meter a writer sets up in his poem is varied by the way one reads it for its meaning. A tension is set up between the metrical regularity of the poem and its rhetorical irregularity.

The basic pattern of "The Pheasant" is iambic tetrameter, a very common meter. If you ask one of your class to read it with emphasis on the meter, it will begin to sound quite silly. Have them read it again, with emphasis on the meaning, and discuss the difference. Several observations should come out of the discussion. First, note that some stressed syllables receive more stress than others. Second, note that different phrases are read at different rates of speed. Third, several lines substitute a different foot for the iamb. For example, in line four the first foot is a spondee: "Scórn búlged hĭs eyéballs óut with gráce." Line ten substitutes a trochee in the first foot: "Séttled with hĭs héad upráised."

You quite probably won't want to deal with all these difficult terms with your class. The main point to make is that in reading poetry well, attention must be paid both to the meter set up by the poet and to the full meaning of the words.

Reading Readiness:

1. Have you ever been hunting, or walking in a field, and seen a pheasant spring up in front of you? If not, have you seen a picture of a pheasant?

2. In what way can a pheasant be said to have "jewelled feathers"?

Suggested Questions:

1. What way does the poet describe the bird in the first three stanzas? What way does he describe it in the last three? Why do you think he does this? (The poet is contrasting life and death, and the contrast is supported by the description of the bird's attitude.)

2. What do you think is the poet's attitude toward the incident described in the poem? (This is a difficult question. The poet's attitude seems rather detached. He makes the contrast, but doesn't moralize on it. Your class will probably think he is sympathetic, but you may want to point out to them that it is probably they who are projecting their attitudes.)

Suggested Activities:

1. Have the class scan the first two lines of the poem, which are regular iambic tetrameter. Ask one of your students to read the rest of the poem, accentuating the regular meter in a heavy, singsong, "rocking-horse" way. Invite comment.

2. Invite alternate readings. Discuss stress, rate of speed, substitute feet. With an interested class you may be able to get several different readings of the poem. If so, you can discuss the question of the connection between interpretation of the poem and the way it is read.

"Digging for China," by Richard Wilbur

Analysis:

Rhetorical stress is related, of course, to metrical variation or the idea of substitute feet. But since we want the students to get a firm idea of rhythm and meter, we place this section last. The good reader of poetry remains constantly aware of the two forces operating in a poem--metrical regularity and rhetorical variation. With a good class you could discuss how these two opposing forces must be kept in mind, and could probably get some sensitive readings from your students.

Any poem will do to illustrate the idea. We suggest Wilbur's "Digging for China" because it offers some interesting variations in the basically iambic pattern, and also because it is a poem that captures graphically a common childhood experience. As a further aid to oral interpretation, the poem is cast as a dramatic reminiscence, enabling the young readers to create a character for the speaker as they read.

In dealing with the poem, scan a couple of lines so that your class can determine the iambic pattern. Then ask someone to read it. Discuss the necessity of reading through the end of a run-on line, in which the phrase carries over to the following line, the necessity of giving varying pauses, and of giving varying degrees of stress, all as means of making the poem sound natural while still encased in a form more rigid than normal prose discourse.

Reading Readiness:

"Digging for China"

1. Vocabulary: trowel
coolie
pall
paten (a metallic disc)

2. If you dug a hole straight through the earth, would you really be in China? Is it possible to dig such a hole? Why?

Suggested Questions:

1. Who is speaking in this poem?

2. What is the occasion?

3. Why did he try to dig to China?

4. Which words tell you how he felt when he stood up? --(blinking, staggering)

5. What does the appearance of the barns, fields, and trees tell you about the boy's feelings? --(He is dizzy from digging upside down.)

6. How had the boy succeeded or not succeeded in doing what he set out to do? --(He did not dig to China, but in his dizzy physical state his usual surroundings seemed strange and different.)

7. What is the meter of the poem? --(Scan a few lines to determine its iambic pentameter pattern.)

8. In order for this poem to maintain its meaning how does it need to be read? --(Introduce the idea of reading for meaning, and discuss. Have several students read it aloud.)

Suggested Activities:

1. Discuss why people continue to tell children about digging for China.

2. Discuss how people succeed or fail in similar ways as illustrated in "Digging for China."

3. Write about a dream you are holding on to.

ED 075849

DICTION (WORD CHOICE)
DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION
ONOMATOPOEIA

REVISED VERSION, FOR TRYOUT 1971-72

The revised version of this unit differs from the original primarily in the sequence of the concepts presented. The order is reversed from the previous version.

We begin with poems dealing with onomatopoeia, a simpler idea to grasp than denotation or diction. We then move to a study of denotation and connotation, closing with the idea of diction or word choice. It seems much more sensible this way, since so much of a poet's choice of words is based on considerations of precisely such things as onomatopoetic intensity and, more importantly, the connotation of words.

We have revised the unit further to move into a more logical sequence the readiness suggestions, and the suggested questions and activities.

Many teachers said the unit was too short. We have added several poems. It should be pointed out, however, that the concepts treated in this unit can be found in any poem. If the selections herein are unsatisfactory for one reason or another, it is easy enough to find others that illustrate the points just as well.

We have tried to suggest activities that will help the teacher avoid having to spend too much time lecturing in front of the class. But here, as everywhere, all our suggestions cannot take the place of the inventive teacher.

DICTION (WORD CHOICE)
DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION
ONOMATOPOEIA

Diction: Word choice; vocabulary. The words a writer picks, instead of others he might have picked.

Denotation: The literal meaning of a word. Its referential function. What it stands for.

Connotation: The associations or emotional overtones of a word, as distinguished from its denotation.

Onomatopoeia: A phonetic intensive. The sound of a word supporting its meaning.

INTRODUCTION

One way to regard poetry is as a system of words. The careful poet pays attention to the words he uses in a poem, and the responsive reader pays attention to the choice of words the poet makes. Words are the basic tools of a poet, like sounds to the musician or colors to the painter or marble to the sculptor.

The difficulty of getting young readers to be aware of the basic importance of word choice in poetry is the very fact that it is so basic. It is like air and breathing, such a fundamental operation one never thinks about it. So, too, with words. We use them all the time, and are constantly selecting one word instead of another, arranging them this way instead of that, adapting our level of usage to the situation. But the operation is so fundamental, so constant and unconscious, that we are rarely aware of the complexity of the process and its importance.

Poets, however, <u>are</u> aware of the process and its importance, and spend a great deal of time in the conscious selection of words. Here, as elsewhere, you will want to make your students aware that in their normal speech they use all the linguistic and poetic devices poets use; the only difference is that poets are more conscious, more careful, and more practiced. The purpose of this chapter is to help your students become aware as much as possible of the fact of word choice, its importance in poetry, and its importance in their own communication. We can discuss the process under a few major headings.

<u>Diction</u>. We mention the term first because it is the broadest, but paradoxically it is the one least likely to succeed with your students. And for the same reason mentioned above: it is so obvious and pervasive that it escapes notice, and requires a more objective knowledge of language than most elementary students can be expected to have.

In the discussion of poetry, diction has nothing to do with elocution. It means rather word choice, vocabulary selection. By selection we mean the choice of words from different areas of the total vocabulary available. In this sense, diction is closely related to the idea of levels of usage. Let us illustrate. Here are a couple of lines of poetry, both dealing with the same topic, the sound of a horn.

> Blow, bugle, blow! Set the wild echoes flying!
>
> I send down cool sounds

You would not normally expect to find those two lines in the same poem. If you did find them together, the poet would have been trying, by the juxtaposition of different dictions, to achieve a startling effect. The point is clear enough: we select words from different areas of our vocabulary for the same reason that we use different levels of usage--to communicate as emphatically as possible with regard both to our purpose and our audience.

Diction, then, can be defined as the selection of words from a particular area or level of the total vocabulary available. A child does not speak to his teacher in the same way he speaks to a friend on the playground; nor does he address his mother the way he does his little sister. In poetry, the words in any given poem will normally be from the same area, and any word from a different area will be there for a particular effect.

Denotation and Connotation. As we mentioned, considerations such as those above may not work with your students. They are probably still too close to their language to be able to objectify such ideas as levels of diction or areas of vocabulary. You may wish to tread lightly in that area. But you should have no difficulty in getting them to understand the idea of connotation and the use of this resource of language both by themselves and by writers.

Connotation and denotation are related, of course, to the idea of diction--and will be seen later to be closely related to the idea of imagery. The concept should be obvious to your students. Denotation is simply the referential function of a word--what it stands for. Connotation is the emotional overtones and associations the word carries. "Girl" and "lass" both denote a young female, but the connotative overtones of "lass," deriving from its archaism and suggestion of pastoral innocence, are much richer than the more neutral "girl." Any number of examples can be used, and your students should enjoy the exercise of comparing the connotations of words with roughly similar denotations: "horse - steed," for example, or "grass - lawn," or "boat - galleon." The list is infinite.

The point to be made is that while we all unconsciously select words for their connotative as well as the denotative functions, poets are more conscious and careful in their selection, and pay a great deal of attention to the connotative aspect of words.

You may want to deal with a couple of related points, which will undoubtedly come out in your class discussions. Not everyone attaches exactly the same connotations or associations to the same word. If a writer is not careful, his audience will fail to respond to a word in the way he wishes. But generally speaking there is enough similarity in your response and mine to a word like, say, "galleon," to give the writer some confidence in using it. A second point is that much of the connotation of a word will come from the context in which it is used. The poet who wrote a love song praising his mistress' "little hands" and "little feet," and then went on to praise her "little soul" and "little mind," was making witty use of connotation in context.

Onomatopoeia. A fancy word for a simple idea. But many children like to learn fancy words, so throw it at them. Onomatopoeia is a word in which the sound reinforces or describes the meaning--"crack," "hiss," "bang." The device can be used for interesting sensuous effects:

> The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
> And murmur of innumerable bees.

Consideration of the sound effects of words frequently governs a poet's word choice. Your students should enjoy compiling a list of words and phrases which exhibit onomatopoeic characteristics.

The poems that follow illustrate the concern of poets for diction, connotation, and onomatopoeia. Once again, it should be pointed out that mastery of terminology is no end in itself; that terminology is simply a convenient way of discussing a concept; that the main goal of the chapter is to increase your students' understanding of the potential of language.

The opportunities for student activities in these areas are limitless. You might want to begin your lesson by asking them to discuss the emotional overtones of words, and make a list of what they come up with. (Be sure to record variant opinions.) What's the difference, say, between "guts" and "intestines"? Between "Daddy" and "Father"? Between "house" and "home"? Between "automobile" and "wheels"? Pursue the discussion as far as you want, dealing with diction, introducing connotation, encouraging the class to think about the words they use. Then move into the poetry, as examples for class analysis.

ONOMATOPOEIA

Purpose: To introduce the idea of onomatopoeia; to prepare students for further exploration of connotation and word choice.

Selections: Haiku by Basho and by Koyo, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, pages 92 and 138.

Analysis:

As we mentioned in the introduction to this unit, your students should readily grasp the idea of onomatopoeia, and should enjoy playing with the sounds of such words. There is really no need for an extended analysis of the poems listed above, or of the device itself. It is never a central device in a poem, but will occur anywhere as a means of intensifying an image.

The haiku mentioned above contain good illustrations of onomatopoeia, in such words as "splash," "plop," "chirp," and "watersplash." Rather than mentioning additional titles to illustrate the idea, it is better to note its occurrence in other poems your class reads. Encourage them to find such words, and keep a running list.

A study of onomatopoeia should serve as a good introduction to the far more important ideas of connotation and diction. It is a good way to get students to begin to be aware of the fact that words are deliberately chosen for particular effects.

Readiness:

1. What do we call the sudden noise a jet plane makes? (sonic boom) Why is that a better name than, say, sonic shatter?

2. A sonic boom can break a glass on your shelf. Why would shatter be a better word for the breaking of a glass than boom?

3. If a frog jumped into a pond, what word would you use to describe the sound?

(Discuss with your class the relationship between the sound of such words and the action they describe, and how they are used to heighten the sensory impressions in the haiku. Introduce the word "onomatopoeia" if your class enjoys fancy words.)

Questions and Activities:

1. What words in the haiku are onomatopoetic? (They may not all identify "chirp" in the Koyo poem as an onomatopoetic word. Point it out.)

2. Why do you think poets use such words?

3. Can you think of any words you use in everyday speech that are onomatopoetic? (A faucet that goes drip-drip; breakfast food that goes snap-crackle-pop; and so forth.)

4. Any number of activities can go with this lesson. Ask your students to keep a running list of such words. Ditto off a list of several sentences requiring an onomatopoetic word, with the space blank, and have them supply the word ("The class _____(buzzed) with excitement when the principal and the policeman walked in." "The fire _____(crackled) merrily on the hearth," etc.) Then ask them to make up such sentences. Have them find and bring to class samples of onomatopoetic words they find in their reading or hear on the street. Have them make up an onomatopoetic word, and have the class try to guess what it describes.

DICTION; DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

Purpose: To make your class more aware of the overtones of words; to make them aware of the reasons for selection of words to control mood and tone.

Selections: From "Two Jazz Poems," by Carl Hines, reprinted in Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. . . And Other Modern Verse, compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, & Hugh Smith. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1967, page 74.

"The Splendor Falls," by Tennyson (reproduced)

"The Shell," by James Stephens, from Collected Poems. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916.

"Get the Gasworks," by David Ignatow, from Figures of the Human. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1948.

"Old Florist," by Theodore Roethke, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 72.

"Child on Top of a Greenhouse," by Theodore Roethke, reprinted in Poems to Enjoy, by Dorothy Petitt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, page 84.

Note to the teacher:

You are trying in this unit to get across several related ideas, which your students should then be able to apply to any poem. Probably the best way to instill the concepts is through discussion and activities; after they have grasped the concepts you can help them apply them to various poems. We include a treatment of four poems here, but any poem which you think will do the job can be used, for the idea of diction and connotation is universally applicable.

What do you want your students to understand? First, that words have connotation, which is frequently far more important in a given context than their denotation. Second, that everyone, including themselves, has levels of diction (or areas of their total vocabulary) from which to choose. Third, that everyone, including themselves, makes choices from these different areas, frequently based on the connotative value of the word, to give a particular mood, or tone, or intensity to their utterance.

We recommend, therefore, lots of preliminary activities and discussions. A few suggestions follow:

1. List a few groups of words on the board, or hand them out on a dittoed sheet. (boat-galleon-tub; horse-steed-charger; jail-dungeon-klink; soldier-warrior-GI; automobile-wheels-jalopy; etc.) Generate a discussion of the different overtones among the members of each grouping. Have each student list on his sheet his own grouping. Have selected students read their grouping and discuss the different connotations.

2. Have some students bring in contemporary records (non-vocal) which make use of unusual sounds. Most rock music or electronic music will do. As the students listen, have them write the words which occur to them that describe the sounds. Another exercise could involve sentences, or the more adventurous student might try writing a lyric. If your taste runs to the classics, the same exercise can be used with tone poems (Mussorgsky's A Night on Bald Mountain, Saint-Saens' Danse Macabre), or things like Beethoven's 6th Symphony, or other program music (Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite, Rossini's William Tell Overture).

3. The symbols of patriotism illustrate the relationship between the denotative and connotative functions. In a picture (such as "The Spirit of '76") or simply through discussion of the accoutrements of a parade, have your class pick out the flag, the drum, etc., and examine the connotations of each.

4. Leaving the verb out of a sentence you write on the board, ask for several possible words that would be proper. Discuss the connotation of each suggestion. Ask for some that would not be proper, and discuss the reason. Example: "The pitcher_____out to the mound." Proper: walked, strode, went, etc. Improper: skipped, tiptoed, hopped, etc.

5. Have them imagine a scene or an incident (a car wreck, a hold-up), and describe it to a friend, a little brother, their parents, as a reporter for the local paper, etc. The object is to show how diction varies with audience and incident.

From "Two Jazz Poems" by Carl Hines

"The Splendor Falls" by Tennyson

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying.
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

Analysis:

These poems contain the lines used to illustrate the idea of diction in the introduction to this unit. As was pointed out there, it may be difficult to get your children to recognize such a basic phenomenon, but it might be worth trying. Begin by asking them about their own choice of words in different situations. (For instance, how would they tell of seeing a car wreck to a friend? As a reporter for the paper? As a witness in a courtroom? Do they use the same diction in talking to their principal as they do to their classmates?)

If they seem to understand the concept, proceed to a comparison of the two poems. One way to illustrate the concept would be to try shifting phrases back and forth. Carl Hines says he is on "the crest of a tallest hill." What would happen to his poem if you substituted Tennyson's "snowy summit old in story"? Or vice versa? Can they imagine Hines' word "yeah" appearing in Tennyson's poem? Is there any difference between "Blow, bugle, blow" and "I send down cool sounds"?

You might proceed from there to a general discussion of the way in which our choice of words (our diction) governs the mood and tone of what we say ("Man, I saw a real smashup!" versus "Two vehicles collided."). If possible, try to relate the idea of word choice to the idea of connotation. The two concepts are very close to each other. In dealing with the Hines poem, you could also reinforce the point that was mentioned earlier that poetry does not depend on "poetic" subject or diction.

Readiness:

From "Two Jazz Poems"

1. Vocabulary: bereted

2. Can you imagine what it would be like to practice and practice a musical instrument until you were very good--and then found that no one would listen to you play?

3. Or suppose you had something very important to say in class--and no one would let you speak. How would you feel?

4. Do you think an audience helps a musician? How?

"The Splendor Falls"

1. Vocabulary: cataract

2. What are echoes? Let's pretend to be echoes. Johnny, you shout "Hello" and the first five people in your row will be your echoes. Let's see if you all know how to be echoes.

Questions:

1. What words do you find in Tennyson's poem that help create a mood? What words contribute to the mood of Carl Hines' poem?

2. If you substituted "snowy summits old in story" for Hines' "crest of a tallest hill," would that change the mood of Hines' poem? What if you did it the other way around?

3. Would Hines talk about "wild echoes"? Would Tennyson say "Yeah"? Can you find any words (not counting words like "and") that might be used in both poems? "Proudly," for instance; any others?

4. How do you think choice of words affects the tone of a poem? Do you ever choose words from one part of your vocabulary rather than another? When? Why?

5. The choice of words is called "diction." Can you see any connection between the idea of diction and the idea of connotation which you learned earlier?

"The Shell," by James Stephens

Analysis:

This poem is based on a phenomenon which should be familiar to every child. Place a shell (or a glass or a cup, but ideally a shell) to your ear and you will hear the roar of the sea from whence the shell came. You will want to ask your class what incident triggered the poem. An understanding of the dramatic situation of any poem is one of the most successful ways to interpret it, and here the situation is both obvious and essential to understanding. If your children have never experienced holding shells to their ears, have them do it. Someone must have a large shell; if not, a cup or glass will serve.

What happens when the poet puts the shell to his ear is the subject of the poem, and your students, who have had the same experience, should benefit from discussing the imaginative development of one man's reaction to a common phenomenon.

There is an abundance of riches for illustration of the central concepts of this chapter. Almost any line or any word will do for a discussion of connotation. Ask them to make connections: what, for instance, is the connotative reinforcement of the choice of "whipped" in line 7 and "smitten" in line 27, to mention nothing of "frightened," "whimpers" and "sad." To have them understand the point, offer substitutions: "moved" for "whipped;" "spanked" for "smitten;" "nervous" for "frightened;" and so on. Let them discuss and explore the control of mood exercised by the poet's diction.

Move on to further considerations. Ask them to look closely at lines 19-21:

> And bubbling sea-weeds as the waters go
> Swish to and fro
> Their long, cold tentacles of slimy gray.

Time spent on those three lines can be rewarding, and if your class can see all that is going on in those lines they will have learned their lesson. Consider: "bubbling" and "swish" for onomatopoeia; "slimy gray" and "tentacles" for diction, chosen from that area of vocabulary which is in keeping with the tone of the poem. Ask your class to consider seaweed as tentacles in the context of the mood of the poem. The connotations of fear (the tentacles of an octopus) and the associations of a horrid drowning death should be obvious.

The final two lines bring us out of the terrifying loneliness invoked by the poet, and serve to bring us back to the reality of the situation which began the poem. Ask your students to remark on the imagery of the return: a familiar noise, contrasted with the "frightened croon" and "smitten whimpers" of the shell-invoked fantasy.

Readiness:

1. Try to collect some shells for the students to put to their ears. Some of them may have one at home. If there are no shells available, you can achieve the same sensation by having them hold a cup or something similar to their ears. They should have the experience of hearing the sound. Discuss the idea that this is supposed to be the sea one hears. Ask them to list some words that would describe what they heard.

2. The final line provides an opportunity for defining the difference between something artificial and something real. Depending on the maturity of your class, you might want to introduce this concept. For example; even though vacations are fun, what feelings do you have when you return home and hear your dog bark, or a friend's voice, or the creak of your garage door?

3. Vocabulary: desolate

tentacles

croon

smitten

Questions:

1. What is the speaker doing that makes him write the poem? How do you know?

2. What is his reaction to the incident? How do you know? Select some words in the poem that support your interpretation of his reaction.

3. Substitute some different words for the poet's words, like "evening" for "twilight" in line 26. Read the line with the substitution. Does the line sound the same? Why or why not? (Do this with several substitutions.)

4. Why did the poet use the words "bubbling" and "swish"? Why does he say that the seaweed has "cold tentacles"? What is he comparing the seaweed to? How does this comparison help the mood of the poem?

5. How does the end of the poem give it unity? How does it fit with the beginning? Is it necessary for the poem to have the beginning and the end?

Activities:

1. Describe a scene--a forest, a city street, a sea shore--in which you use words for their connotative value, trying to create a mood.

2. From your reading find examples of words used for their connotative qualities or the precision of their diction. Make a collection and put them on a bulletin board.

3. Look up in the Reader's Digest the feature called "Picturesque Speech." Can you add any suggestions?

4. Draw or paint the scene described by the poem--try to capture the bleakness, emptiness, and colorlessness of the scene. You might add the speaker and/or the cart in a corner somewhere.

5. Have you ever felt alone, cut off from everyone and everything? Most of us feel this way at some time or other. If you have felt this way, write a poem about it.

"Get the Gasworks," by David Ignatow

Analysis:

If you have discussed connotation and diction with your class in studying Stephens' poem, this one should serve as good reinforcement through contrast. There the poet described a lonely seashore, using highly emotive words to capture a mood. Here the poet describes an ugly urban neighborhood, using words from an entirely different diction. See if the class can describe the difference.

Somewhere along the line those children who consider poetry at all pick up the notion--probably from their parents or misguided teachers--that poetry is fairies, elves, roses, and mush. Such an idea will not stand the weight of investigation, and a poem like the present one should help them abandon the notion. The subject matter of poetry can be anything and it might help overcome the reluctance many students feel towards poetry to offer them some selections that "tell it like it is." Certainly the present poem, realistic and almost brutally casual about death, has little to do with fairies and roses.

The poem deals with the "grimy" reality of life in an urban and industrialized society--an accurate picture of an aspect of America that is a far cry from the "spacious skies," "amber waves of grain," and "alabaster cities" of the song. The diction of the poem supports the picture. "You've got America, . boy," for instance, is colloquial idom, as is "kid hot after the ball." The death of one of the kids who is crushed under the wheels of a coal truck is treated with the same sort of casual matter-of-factness: "He gets it over the belly, all right." The tone of the poem is governed by its diction, and your class should be able to see that. Ask them to substitute other words for those in the poem, to see what happens to the connotation and tone. Change "kid" to "child," "belly" to "stomach," "cop" to "policeman," "papa" to "father" and much of the force of the poem disappears.

The central idea of the poem--that the grimy cacophony of modern urban life is reflected in our thinking and our speech--is stated in the middle of the poem:

> You've got the kind of living
> that makes the kind of thinking we do:
> gaswork smokestack whistle tooting wisecracks.

See if the class can recognize this basic idea, and discuss its implications. Even if they are unable to do this, the poem can still be treated satisfactorily as a remarkably vivid picture of life in an urban neighborhood.

Readiness:

1. (The geographic area and urban experiences of the children will determine what readiness needs to be developed here. Don't come on with "have you ever seen someone hit by a truck" type of question; but you might suggest through questions or pictures that this type of thing happens almost everyday in some parts of large cities. Death is a part of life. So is dirt and noise. Why do people live like that? Because it is their home. They are real people. They live in a real world.)

2. Vocabulary: mottled

pungency

Questions:

1. What scene is this poem describing? Describe it in your own words.

2. Is there any central incident in the poem? What is it? How is it treated? How does this treatment fit in with the rest of the poem? (The central incident--the death of the child--is at one with the casual tone of the whole poem.)

3. How does the diction of the poem fit its subject matter? Can you find specific words or phrases that illustrate the author's deliberate choice of words for their connotation?

4. The subject matter of this poem is pretty grimy, and it is not treated very "poetically." Do you think there is such a thing as good and bad subject matter for poetry? Is there such a thing as "poetic" language?--(If you touch on this subject with your class, be sure that they understand that there is no such thing as right subject matter or a right diction for poetry. Anything to eliminate the "fairies, elves, roses," prejudice.)

Activities:

1. This poem offers excellent subject matter for illustration. Have the class plan a picture illustrating it, finding specific details from the poem. Where would they put the river and barges? How prominent and how white should the seagull be?

2. Write an account of the central incident of the poem from the standpoint of one of the "cops," or the driver of the truck.

3. Write on or discuss in class the idea that our environment colors not only our speech but our thinking.

4. Present some pictures of your own area. Have the students select some words or phrases which support what they see.

Alternate Titles:

"Child on Top of a Greenhouse," by Theodore Roethke

"Old Florist," by Theodore Roethke

As we mentioned in the introduction to this unit, the concepts dealt with are central to any poem. If none of the selections included here suit your needs or if they are not right for your class, you can use any poem of your own choosing to illustrate the ideas. But we mention the two Roethke poems here as possible alternates for the selections we have treated.

"Old Florist" is a good poem to use for several reasons. First, it helps as a corrective to the false notion of "poetic" subject matter and diction that we mentioned earlier. There are good examples of onomatopoeia in such words as "flick" and "buzz." The line "Or drown a bug in one spit of tobacco juice" is not only a vivid and non-"poetic" image, but also is drawn from an area of vocabulary that is far more common than, say, Stephens'. It serves to illustrate the point that any word can be appropriate, given a particular context and tone.

"Child on Top of a Greenhouse" should capture the fancy of any class. The question asked by the authors of Poems to Enjoy is a good one: Change all the -ing endings to -ed endings, and what happens to the poem? The immediacy of the sensation is lost, and the incident becomes something remembered from the past. "Seat of my britches" is a highly colloquial phrase, much more vivid than, say, "the bottom of my trousers." For precision of diction, discuss "crackling" in line 2 with your class, and try to find a better word.